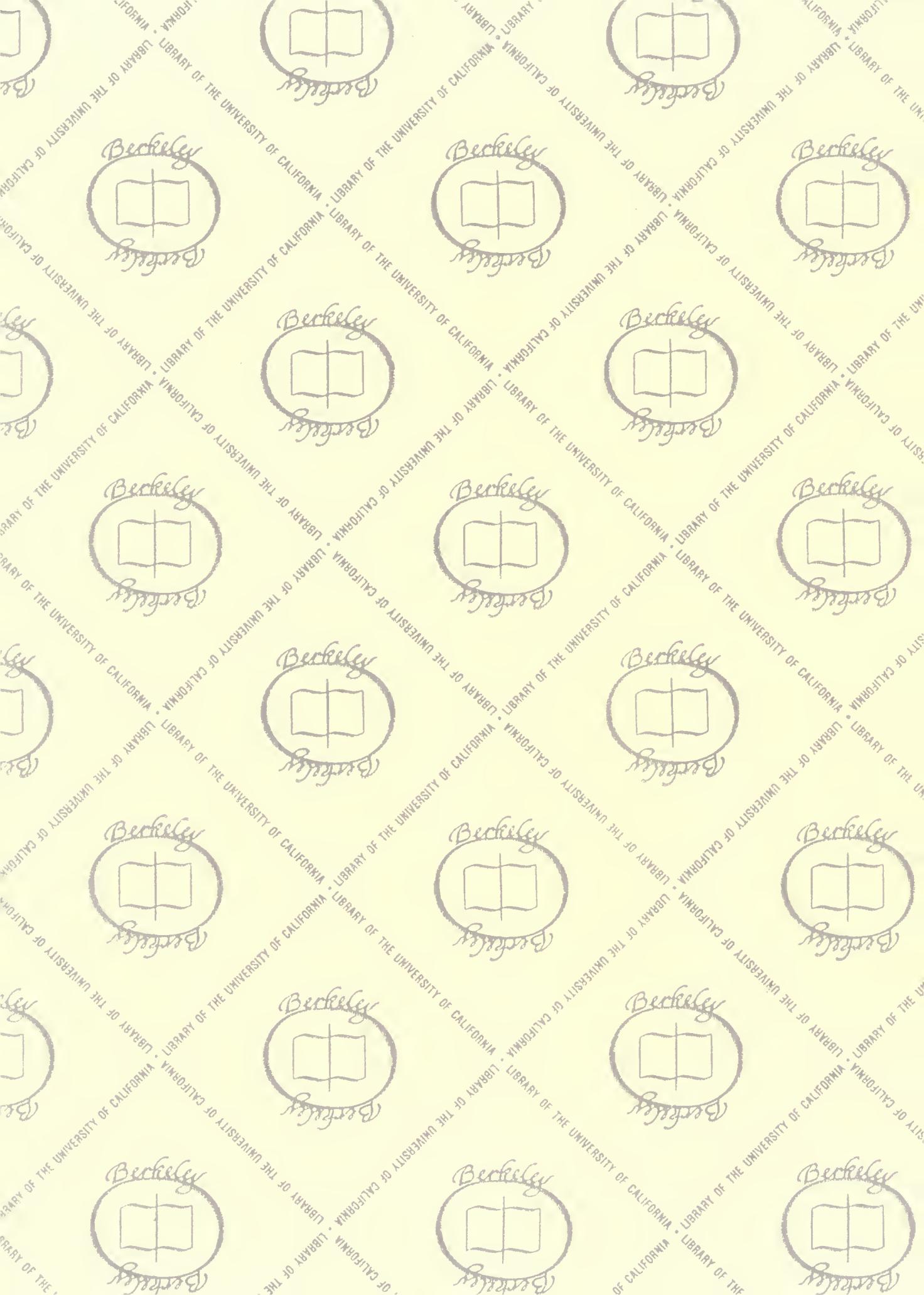


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Governmental History Documentation Project
Goodwin Knight/Edmund Brown, Sr., Era

Mary Ellen Leary

A JOURNALIST'S PERSPECTIVE: GOVERNMENT
AND POLITICS IN CALIFORNIA AND THE BAY AREA

An Interview Conducted by
Harriet Nathan
in 1979

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MARY ELLEN LEARY

1981

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PREFACE

Covering the years 1953 to 1966, the Goodwin Knight-Edmund G. "Pat" Brown, Sr., Oral History Series is the second phase of the Governmental History Documentation Project begun by the Regional Oral History Office in 1969. That year inaugurated the Earl Warren Era Oral History Project, which produced interviews with Earl Warren and other persons prominent in politics, criminal justice, government administration, and legislation during Warren's California era, 1925 to 1953.

The Knight-Brown series of interviews carries forward the earlier inquiry into the general topics of: the nature of the governor's office, its relationships with the legislature and with its own executive departments, biographical data about Governors Knight and Brown and other leaders of the period, and methods of coping with the rapid social and economic changes of the state. Key issues documented for 1953-1966 were: the rise and decline of the Democratic party, the impact of the California Water Plan, the upheaval of the Vietnam War escalation, the capital punishment controversy, election law changes, new political techniques forced by television and increased activism, reorganization of the executive branch, the growth of federal programs in California, and the rising awareness of minority groups. From a wider view across the twentieth century, the Knight-Brown period marks the final era of California's Progressive period, which was ushered in by Governor Hiram Johnson in 1910 and which provided for both parties the determining outlines of government organization and political strategy until 1966.

The Warren Era political files, which interviewers had developed cooperatively to provide a systematic background for questions, were updated by the staff to the year 1966 with only a handful of new topics added to the original ninety-one. An effort was made to record in greater detail those more significant events and trends by selecting key participants who represent diverse points of view. Most were queried on a limited number of topics with which they were personally connected; a few narrators who possessed unusual breadth of experience were asked to discuss a multiplicity of subjects. Although the time frame of the series ends at the November 1966 election, when possible the interviews trace events on through that date in order to provide a logical baseline for continuing study of succeeding administrations. Similarly, some narrators whose experience includes the Warren years were questioned on that earlier era as well as the Knight-Brown period.

The present series has been financed by grants from the California State Legislature through the California Heritage Preservation Commission and the office of the Secretary of State, and by some individual donations. Portions of several memoirs were funded partly by the California Women in Politics Project under a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, including a matching grant from the Rockefeller Foundation; the two projects were produced concurrently in this office, a joint effort made feasible by overlap of narrators, topics, and staff expertise.

The Regional Oral History Office was established to tape record autobiographical interviews with persons significant in the history of California and the West. The Office is under the administrative direction of James D. Hart, Director of The Bancroft Library, and Willa Baum, head of the Office.

Amelia R. Fry, Project Director
Gabrielle Morris, Project Coordinator

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GOODWIN KNIGHT-EDMUND BROWN, SR. ERA ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
(California, 1953-1966)

Interviews Completed and In Process, March 1981

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Bradley, Don, *Managing Democratic Campaigns, 1954-1966*. In process.

Brown, Edmund G., Sr., "Pat", *Years of Growth, 1939-1966; Law Enforcement, Politics, and the Governor's Office*. In process.

Champion, Hale, *Communication and Problem-Solving: A Journalist in State Government*. 1981.

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Kent, Roger, *Building the Democratic Party in California, 1954-1966*. 1981.

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Rodda, Albert. In process.

Simpson, Roy E., *California Department of Education, with an Introduction by Wilson Riles, Sr.* 1978.

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Burch, Meredith
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 Brown, Frank
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Button, A. Ronald, *California Republican Party Official and State Treasurer of California, 1956-1958.*
 Gibson, Phil, *Recollections of a Chief Justice of the California Supreme Court.*
 Mosk, Stanley, *Attorney General's Office and Political Campaigns, 1958-1966.*
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 McKay, Robert, *Robert McKay and the California Teacher's Association.*
 Sexton, Keith, *Legislating Higher Education: A Consultant's View of the Master Plan for Higher Education.*
 Sherriffs, Alex, *The University of California and the Free Speech Movement: Perspectives from a Faculty Member and Administrator.*

THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE UNDER EDMUND G. BROWN, SR. 1981.

Becker, William, *Working for Civil Rights: With Unions, the Legislature, and Governor Pat Brown.*
 Christopher, Warren, *Special Counsel to the Governor: Recalling the Pat Brown Years.*
 Davis, May Layne, *An Appointment Secretary Reminiscences.*
 Kline, Richard, *Governor Brown's Faithful Advisor.*
 Mesplé, Frank, *From Clovis to the Capitol: Building a Career as a Legislative Liaison.*
 Poole, Cecil, *Executive Clemency and the Chessman Case.*

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Barrett, Douglas, *Goodwin Knight's Governor's Office, 1953-1958, and the Youth Authority, 1958-1965.*
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 Lemmon, Maryalice, *Working in the Governor's Office, 1950-1959.*
 Mason, Paul, *Covering the Legislature for Governor Goodwin J. Knight.*

GOODWIN KNIGHT: AIDS, ADVISERS, AND APPOINTEES. 1981.

Bell, Dorothy Hewes, *Reminiscences of Goodwin Knight*.

Finks, Harry, *California Labor and Goodwin Knight, the 1950s*.

Hill, John Lamar, *First Minority Member of the State Board of Funeral Examiners*.

Pollard, Milton, *Political and Personal Friend of Earl Warren, Goodwin Knight, and Hubert Humphrey*.

INDEPENDENT DEMOCRATS. In process.

Salinger, Pierre

Yorty, Sam

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Nofziger, Franklyn, *Press Secretary for Ronald Reagan, 1966*.

Parkinson, Gaylord, *California Republican Party Official, 1962-1967*.

Roberts, William, *Professional Campaign Management and the Candidate, 1960-1966*.

Spencer, Stuart, *Developing a Campaign Management Organization*.

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATIVE LEADERS, VOLUME I. 1980.

Caldecott, Thomas W., *Legislative Strategies, Relations with the Governor's Office, 1947-1957*.

Fisher, Hugo, *California Democratic Politics, 1958-1965*.

Lanterman, Frank, *California Assembly, 1949-1978: Water, Mental Health, and Education Issues*.

Richards, Richard, *Senate Campaigns and Procedures, California Water Plan*.

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATIVE LEADERS, VOLUME II. 1981.

Burns, Hugh, *Legislative and Political Concerns of the Senate Pro Tem, 1957-1970*.

Lincoln, Luther, *Young Turk to Speaker of the California Assembly, 1948-1958*.

Rattigan, Joseph, *A Judicial Look at Civil Rights, Education, and Reapportionment in the State Senate, 1959-1966*.

Sumner, Bruce, *California State Assemblyman and Chairman of the Constitution Revision Commission, 1964-1970*.

Allen, Bruce F., *California Oil and Water, and the Politics of Reform, 1953-1960*.

ONE MAN-ONE VOTE AND SENATE REAPPORTIONMENT, 1964-1966. 1980.

Teale, Stephen, *The Impact of One Man-One Vote on the Senate: Senator Teale Reviews Reapportionment and Other Issues, 1953-1966*.

Allen, Don A., *A Los Angeles Assemblyman Recalls the Reapportionment Struggle*.

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Peirce, John, *California State Department of Finance, 1953-1958*.

Levit, Bert W., *State Finance and Innovations in Government Organization, 1944-1959*.

Tieburg, Albert B., *California State Department of Employment, 1945-1966*.

Wedemeyer, John, *California State Department of Social Welfare, 1959-1966*.

Lowry, James, *California State Department of Mental Hygiene, 1960s*.

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Blease, Coleman, *A Lobbyist Views the Knight-Brown Era.*

Coffey, Bertram, *Reflections on George Miller, Jr., Governors Pat and Jerry Brown, and the Democratic Party.*

Engle, Lucretia, *Clair Engle as Campaigner and Statesman.*

Nelson, Helen, *California's First Consumer Counsel.*

REMEMBERING WILLIAM KNOWLAND. In process.

Jewett, Emelyn Knowland

Johnson, Estelle Knowland

Manolis, Paul

REPORTING FROM SACRAMENTO. 1981.

Behrens, Earl C., *Gubernatorial Campaigns and Party Issues: A Political Reporter's View, 1948-1966.*

Bergholz, Richard, *Reporting on California Government and Politics, 1953-1966.*

Kosson, Sydney, *Covering Goodwin Knight and the Legislature for the San Francisco News, 1956-1958.*

SAN FRANCISCO REPUBLICANS. 1980.

Christopher, George, *Mayor of San Francisco and Republican Party Candidate.*

Weinberger, Caspar W., *California Assembly, Republican State Central Committee, and Elections, 1953-1966.*

CALIFORNIA WATER ISSUES, 1950-1966. 1981.

Bonderson, Paul R., *Executive Officer, Regional and State Water Pollution and Water Quality Control Boards, 1950-1966.*

Brody, Ralph M., *Revising Legislation and Building Public Support for the California Water Project, 1959-1960; Brief History of the Westlands Water District.*

Brown, Edmund G., Sr., *The California Water Project: Personal Interest and Involvement in the Legislation, Public Support, and Construction, 1950-1966.*

Goldberg, B. Abbott, *Water Policy Issues in the Courts, 1950-1966.*

Warne, William E., *Administration of the Department of Water Resources, 1961-1966.*

INTERVIEW HISTORY

Mary Ellen Leary provided six interviews from February 23, 1979 to July 27, 1979 for the Knight-Brown Series in the Governmental History Documentation Project. The tape-recorded sessions lasted from two to two and a half hours each, and were held in the afternoons in the sunny living room of her Piedmont home. After the sessions were transcribed, the interviewer verified a few details as planned and lightly edited the draft for the narrator, who made further additions and gave her final approval.

Files and bookcases crowded Mary Ellen Leary's study adjoining the living room, and as she spoke of people and events, she referred to batches of notebooks and clippings. These included her early articles and special features published in the San Francisco News when she was first a reporter, then political editor, and finally associate editor. Clippings of her current stories came from papers served by Pacific News Service, the California Journal, and many other magazines and newspapers.

A carrying case held Nieman Fellowship applications to be evaluated before the selection committee met at Harvard for final judging. One of the first two women to be named a Nieman Fellow, Mary Ellen Leary spoke with delight of the mind-expanding year of Harvard study, and the courtesy and support of Arthur Schlesinger as advisor and friend. She smilingly recalled her defense of her own view of herself as a Harvard student. She had insisted gently but firmly that she would read in the Widener Library and not, as women were then asked to do, in a special area set aside for the Radcliffe students.

Her zestful narrative of persons and events moved along at a lively pace, sometimes briefly delayed but not disrupted by events in her busy professional and domestic life. An incoming phone call would confirm a quote or an interview appointment for a current project; her husband would return from teaching duties at law school; a turkey would be removed from the oven for a family celebration; the interview would continue as easily and briskly as before.

Mary Ellen Leary is now widely recognized as an accomplished and fairminded journalist; she also retains the same eager interest she brought as a newly graduated Stanford English major, serving as secretary to the city editor at the News, waiting and hoping for her turn at one of the two "women's" slots on the city side. During those years as secretary, she walked around San Francisco on her own, learning to develop her beat and her understanding of city welfare and housing problems as well as the emerging role of the federal government. Her stories as reporter brought interviews with lady wrestlers and diplomats, politicians, academics, bureaucrats, and civic leaders. Appalled at the city's wartime living conditions, one day she brought Chief Administrative Officer Tom Brooks on a tour to see for himself the worst of San Francisco's three-shift bedrooms and lack of plumbing.

She told of sharing rides to Sacramento with Tommy Maloney and Squire Behrens on the way to cover state government, wondering how as a young woman reporter she could ever find out what was really going on. Her grasp and understanding grew to include leaders and issues, legislators and bureaucrats, candidates and governors, political parties, lobbies and clienteles, water problems, energy, and economics. Further, she recognized the human side of politics: the "curious personalities" who served in the California legislature for \$100 a month in the Olson era, and the more substantial persons who emerged later. She recalled being caught in the physical crush at a political meeting in San Francisco when young activists just back from World War II sought to push their way into a room closed against them by stubborn older politicians fighting to retain their own power and dominance and in no mood to share it with newcomers.

Mary Ellen Leary's "idealism about journalism" was stimulated by writers she admired, such as Ruth Finney and Carl Greenberg, and Art Caylor, "a very great friend and a very great mentor." Her determination to write stories of substance led her to value verified facts and accurate quotations, and to collect background documents and papers. That extraordinary research collection is now housed in The Bancroft Library; it includes cartons of files, notebooks, carbon copies of stories, clippings, government reports, documents, research papers, minutes, agendas, names and facts authoritative enough to support a dissertation, but used instead for numbers of readable and reliable articles, for journalism.

The files suggest the range of her news sense and the ability to be on top of the story. Early in the era of postwar planning, she had visited and collected materials about cities across the country, including Pittsburgh and the Golden Triangle because, as she said, the News was interested in redevelopment--specifically the future of the San Francisco produce market area that was to become the Golden Gateway. When the Golden Gate Authority was proposed, Mary Ellen Leary was already in the libraries reading through hearings on the New York Port Authority, learning of its serious problems and drawbacks that provided warnings for the Bay Area proposal.

She knew about networks and cultivated young planners like Catherine Bauer (Wurster), finding them "marvelous story sources," but keeping the constraint of objectivity, a matter she still confronts in her daily work. During one of the memoir sessions, Mary Ellen Leary gave her views, for example, on state political figures, including Governor Jerry Brown. A few days later, the interviewer read a Leary article analyzing the governor's qualities and performance, and reported at the next session that one could not have guessed the writer's personal opinion. Mary Ellen Leary smiled and said softly, "And you wouldn't have known. That's good."

Harriet Nathan
Interviewer-Editor

Governmental History Documentation Project IntervieweeYour full name Mary Ellen Leary SherryDate of birth April 21, 1913Father's full name William Henry LearyFather's place of birth Hatfield, Mass.Mother's full name Alice Marie LynchMother's place of birth Sioux City, Ia. (or Southampton, Ia.)

Born in and brought up early in Salt Lake City, Utah;
Where did you grow up? My mother having died when I was 5 I spent much time with my
grandparents, in Sioux City, IA.; and with an aunt in Omaha Nebraska; still have
family in Salt Lake.

Education Elementary - Catholic schools in Salt Lake; St. Mary's of the Wasatch
in Salt Lake high school; then in Omaha, Duchesse College of Creighton University
for college where I got my B.A. [1934]; M.A. at Stanford [1937] Department of
English; Nieman Fellow, Harvard University [1945-46]

Early employment You probably don't mean the times I waited on table at Stanford,
etc.; first "real" job was on S.F. News, secretary to City Editor from which I
moved in 3 years (depression years were slow years) to be a reporter, and
ultimately political editor and associate editor.

Positions held in state government None - observer of same as political writer.Employment after leaving state government _____

I VIEWS OF CALIFORNIA POLITICS

[Interview 1: February 23, 1979]##

The Speaker and Legislative Leadership

Nathan: You were working on a piece about the speaker of the state assembly?

Leary: I'm doing a piece for the San Francisco Chronicle about the speaker, about Leo McCarthy and Jerry Brown.

Nathan: It sounds like an interesting topic.

Leary: It's been interesting. It's a little bit mixed up, but I did take the opportunity to talk to some people who'd been in the legislature long ago, long before I was in Sacramento. I was trying to find out about Edgar Levey; McCarthy was the first San Franciscan to become speaker since Edgar C. Levey. It was fun because apparently Levey was defeated by Walter Little in a fight, which was the first successful assertion by Los Angeles that they were not going to let San Francisco dominate any more. This was 1933. The big fight was over southern California having their own guy in. Of course, they'd had Merriam before, which really was the same sort of thing.

Some of the San Francisco lawyers I was talking to said [imitates some of the men she spoke to], "If I'm talking off the record, Mary Ellen, all right, I'll tell you about it. Levey was just a tool of the interests just like everybody else." I'd never heard that

##This symbol indicates that a tape or a segment of a tape has begun or ended. For a guide to the tapes see page 215.

Leary: Samish was so strong in the late '20s, but apparently, from those who recalled those years, he was just as strong as could be. But I'm not going to be able to use all of it; I'll use a little reference to that.

The article I'm working on is examining how much the speaker's office was under special interest control up until Samish got ousted, you know, and they had the big fight in the assembly over the speakership and Silliman was the compromise candidate. So, yesterday somebody was telling me that the lobby decided that it would be Silliman, that he was respectable to the media and everybody, but he was still somebody that they chose. Now, that's not something I could ever prove!

Nathan: Now, what do they mean by "the lobby?" Aren't there lots of lobbies?

Leary: As somebody put it to me, the respectable special interests who thought of themselves as WASP, idealistic, big-business leadership got together after Samish and said, "We're not going to be ruined any more. Our image is ruined by having Samish be the one who symbolizes us. We are respectable interests. We are going to choose somebody whom we're not ashamed of as our selection as speaker. And we're going to keep the liquor boys and all these out."

Of course, I can't either identify or say, but that's what comes through, and I think that's kind of consistent. Silliman was not a strong person. I always wondered how he got it. He served a couple of terms, and then Ralph Brown came in, but sort of reluctantly.

Unruh's Style and Tactics

Leary: But, anyway, I was interested in this whole thing about the evolution of the speaker's office, breaking away from the lobby and becoming a little bit more independent, and then Unruh coming in. Of course, Unruh said--now, did he say it, or did somebody else say it?--"Pat [Brown] always took credit for having made me speaker." I think he [Unruh] said it. Ralph Brown was happy to become a judge to get out of there because he didn't want to be speaker, but even happier was Unruh to see him go because Unruh knew that's where he was going to be. They had apparently this remarkable thing of Ralph getting the appointment, and Unruh brought it about that they voted on the speaker for the next session, I think the last day of the session.

Nathan: Is that usual?

Leary: No, not at all! He maneuvered it so that he got elected then, and if they came back they would have to oust him; they'd have to replace him with somebody. He would be the incumbent and, of course, as incumbent would have the chance to start naming people on committees and use his power that way. He even had the power then to propose committee chairmen, and since the whole power game in Sacramento is played around committees, he obviously held a strong position.

Unruh said to me, "There is no job in the State of California that is more exciting than being the speaker." I said, "You mean governor?" [laughter] and he said, "Well, that doesn't mean I wouldn't like to be governor. But the speaker's job is so complex; you are dealing in the middle of political forces all the time that you have to keep at bay, you have to keep your own people happy, and you have to give a sort of modicum of leadership yourself, and you have to have some relations with the governor and with the third house. All of this is so exciting and there's so much tension there that it's just a wonderful job! It's just marvelous!"

Nathan: Right. What did you think of his "Big Daddy" image, or how would you assess his performance as speaker?

Leary: I think it hurt him, the "Big Daddy" image. But I think it was part of his nature. One lobbyist that I talked to, who was being very careful about how he expressed himself, said, "Jesse was more centralist or centrist than McCarthy. He held very tight control and he was secret. He wasn't open about things. He was running it himself, alone."

I think the "Big Daddy" was all part of that as much as just his physical image. But it was a style. He laughs now about saying that he was pretty young. He was talking about somebody in the legislature who drank. I said, "Well, he drank a lot, which was one of the things that hurt him." He said, "No, he didn't drink so much. It was just that he couldn't stand drinking as much as the rest of us." And he said, "But we all drank too much in those days," which from Jesse Unruh was interesting, because it was a roistering kind of a style.

So, I think the "Big Daddy" image hurt him. It came to hurt him in the legislature, and I certainly think it demolished his chances of being governor. I just think he lost a kind of dignity about it, but he clearly didn't realize he was losing it at the time. He thought his own personal forcefulness would override the distaste people would have for his style. But I think he did some marvelous things for the legislature and for the speaker's office.

Nathan: What comes to mind when you think of his contributions?

Leary: Oh, well, he said right away, "Knowledge is power," and he was always conscious of wanting to know more. He said that the thing that he was very aware of when he first was in the legislature was how much the governor controlled knowledge about the budget. I said, "But you had your legislative auditor who was good and noted all over the country for being good." And he said, "It wasn't enough. It wasn't enough. We needed more research and we needed more information for the committees. We needed to be able to look into individual areas of government more." What he meant was he needed to control that a little bit more himself. But by bringing in staff and setting it up, funding it, why, I think he really did do a lot for the legislature.

He was conscious of trying to make it be a respected governmental agency; and it had been so besmirched in reputation for so long that I think that there isn't any doubt he did elevate its status.

Nathan: Do you have the impression that the media was being fair or not fair to him in slapping a title on him?

Leary: [pauses] Not fair, but it's part of the media's game. He invited it a little bit. I think he--you know, they used the word "arrogant." They used to use the word "arrogant" about Jerry [Governor Edmund G. Brown, Jr.] a lot, and it seemed to me very unfair. It was that Jerry had an aloof personality, and I didn't think it was so much arrogance as a sort of detachment. Maybe it's arrogance or at least he's grown into arrogance. But I used to be sensitive to that being an unfair characterization.

I felt there was a lot more to Jesse Unruh as a leader than the media gave him credit for, really, because all over the country I know he was going around giving lectures.

Nathan: He lectured at Harvard, for example, didn't he?

Leary: Yes, yes. And his concept of the legislative body as a responsible partner and even initiator in legislation--he gave great impetus to this whole movement, you know, which has been coming along in Washington too. This is part of what interests me about the speakership as such a pivotal part of government because I think McCarthy--if he's successful, and nobody can predict this--will have moved the whole realm of the speaker and the role of leader of the legislature into an even higher step of being a place where power lies and where political policy-making and responsibility are to be looked for.

Taking the Initiative

Leary: Many successful legislators initiated significant studies prior to this time and initiated governmental direction. But for a long time the reality was--especially in Warren's time and in Pat Brown's--that the governor's role was that of policy initiator. It was interesting when Reagan was governor that he tried to initiate but his relationship with the legislature became a kind of stand-off, he was frustrated by them as well as by the courts in what he set out to do, and near the end of his term he learned to work with the legislature. But to a great extent as you look back on tax plans and law intended to shore up welfare and such you discover that Democratic leadership in the legislature--and even liberal Republican leaders such as Bill Bagley in the assembly--came to have a greater role of initiating programs. I think this helped incubate a sense of some power in the legislature when Jerry Brown became governor; though the legislature didn't demonstrate enough power to create property tax reform. Not enough to reduce taxes in a way that would satisfy voters. But it did build a role of independence from the governor.

It's so much subject to pressure from the lobbies that it's hard to tell how his successor and other successors would manage, but at least he's moving it a little bit ahead of what Jess did with it.

Nathan: Did you say "Jess" or "Jesse?"

Leary: Jess. He dropped the "e." He used "Jess" when running for governor but picked it up again when he ran for treasurer and is using it now. At least I do recall a period when he dropped the "e."

McCarthy's Performance

Nathan: That's also interesting, your view that McCarthy is in a sense following along the line that Unruh laid out.

Leary: Well, one thinks of that, Harriet, only because of the conflict with the governor, but I think it's quite different. I think that Unruh was the initiator of the conflict there in his case, and I think it was because he had had some honest differences with Pat over policy. I'd have to go back and review what the cases were, to be sure, but my feeling is that he was such a strong man, and his ambition was strong, and Pat was somebody that he could

Leary: conflict with, whereas now I think the reverse has happened. I think that McCarthy has been very supportive of Jerry for the last four years and self-obliterating virtually, and that it has only been a kind of sequence of times when he felt that Jerry wasn't quite squaring with him on things, a couple of times when he took a position thinking that was the established Brown position and then found that Brown had switched and hadn't told him about it, or something like that which created conflict and led to real differences between them.

Nathan: Now, this was even before the constitutional convention issue?

Leary: Yes, yes.

Nathan: Do you remember any--?

Leary: I don't remember the instances, but I remember that the papers focused on them sharply and said that McCarthy had been embarrassed about it; so they're in the clips.

Nathan: I see, yes.

Leary: There may have been many sub-surface differences over legislation, but I think one concerned the second year's response to Proposition 13. That was the 1978 (June) initiative which had been sponsored by Howard Jarvis and cut property taxes about in half for everybody, home owners and business. The property tax supported local government and loss of that much revenue would have paralyzed them. So they were rescued by a quite remarkably quick package of state tax aid, which legislative leaders put together, McCarthy very prominent in this. But when the second year came along after Proposition 13, I think the legislature wanted to settle upon some permanent fund distribution, that everybody could rely on into the future. And I rather think the administration may have wanted the leeway in relation to surplus funds provided by a temporary plan, something just tiding over to one more year. So I think that was one difference of major importance between the two.

Maybe it was education. Anyway, on about a couple of things for two days in a row or so, the papers were talking about the fact. And then this has been reinforced by things that other people have said to me, that it was clear that McCarthy felt in the relationship between the two of them, in which there was at least enough understanding so that he would be supported and he wouldn't be contradicted--he felt that he was being left out, frozen out of the knowledge of what was going on. As somebody said, he had a snootful of it now and he was going to do something about it.

Nathan: Well, even before the Proposition 13 election and immediately after, there was certainly a discernible difference.

Leary: Yes. Oh, yes. But I think McCarthy's kind of tried to low-key it and tried to go along, but I think he's absolutely through with that now. I think he'll work with Brown on a number of things, and he's not going to overtly fight him on state issues. I think he's furious, though, at his [Brown's] distraction toward the presidency and the resultant abandonment of California's priority. Somehow it just strikes me as being awfully blatant to use the occasion of your inauguration as governor to commence your drive to the presidency.

Nathan: [laughter] Yes.

Leary: If he had done it one day later--but to use that as the point of stepping off for your national attention.

Nathan: I wonder whether that sort of related to his sense of the media.

Leary: Oh, I think it was the most dramatic time Brown could have chosen; he's just been sworn in, it's his moment in the news spotlight and everybody is listening, he had maximum attention. It's the time when if you have something dramatic to say, say it. At this point of his selection to lead California four more years, he commits himself to national concerns. I think he was conveying that the drama was finished with California, so move on. He is so unpredictable. I wouldn't be a bit surprised to see him upset Carter. No, no. I think--well, I don't know.

Nathan: Get the nomination?

Leary: I won't fully say that. I think he's going to really get in there and mix things up.

Nathan: I'm intrigued by your view of McCarthy, his problems, the way he's handling them. How do you see him as performing in his job of leadership within the legislature?

Leary: How I see him is just: (a) what I read, and (b) what I talk to people about, and a little bit of talking to him. But I've been trying to talk to some of his close associates. From the very beginning I've heard he's been the finest speaker that anyone there has ever known, in that he listens to them (whereas I think Unruh would perhaps tell them) and tries very hard to understand the pressures that a man really has in his district, pressures he's got to live with and that he must placate. And there is a feeling that there's more openness, more stability, and more predictableness--I mean, you know what policy is; you know how

Leary: things are going to be; you can rely on him. This is much more than people had before. He's just universally termed the best speaker ever. Looking at some speakers in the past, that isn't much of a compliment! But as a leader, it means that he has an awful lot of people who just respect him for the way he handles things.

Now, people keep saying he's tough, but he's never mean; he's never vindictive. He was tough, if you remember Assemblyman Willie Brown of San Francisco.

Nathan: Yes.

Leary: When Brown opposed him, McCarthy knocked him off major committee leadership and he knocked off Willie's friends, too. And he's wise politically. Moretti was for Brown and was trying to support Brown, and they thought they could bring the minority group into Willie's camp. McCarthy had enough credentials with minorities and with the poor and with the elderly and so forth, and enough political savvy to know how to woo them, so that he was able to hold most of the blacks away from Willie, if you remember, and get their votes. Then he knocked all of Willie's friends off committees and everything, but then kind of slowly and gradually, one by one, brought them back, so that while they may not like him any better than they did when they got defeated by him, why, they at least now owe him their return to favor and into the committees they wanted.

I think Willie is an unhappy man, but that's the way the game goes. I have not talked to him about this whole constitutional convention thing. It would be interesting to know how that goes. Of course, he brought the Black Caucus against it. Do you remember that the Black Caucus voted against the constitutional convention?

Nathan: I remember that they did, yes.

Leary: It fascinated me that just a few days after that the Chicano Caucus and the general group--I guess the Mexican-Americans generally in the state (maybe not in the legislature, but a committee of them anyway and a number of Mexican-American political alliance types)--in direct contrast to the stand the blacks took, they came out in support of Brown's position for the constitutional convention. Well, nonsense! What they are for is for Jerry Brown and that's all. They're thanking him for the judgeships and so forth. But that's the way the game is played.

Nathan: Right. Do you see McCarthy's abilities as leading to the governorship or to further office? Does he really want it?

Leary: Yes, I think he's now determined to. I think what he's trying to do is to assert some leadership in the approach towards state problems and that he's moving into it because there's a vacuum.

Nathan: Oh, yes.

Leary: One of the lobbyists said to me, "Leo didn't necessarily want to grab this, but if somebody doesn't do it the state's going to fall apart this year." You've got a governor off running for the presidency, and the state facing the very serious problems of what to do after one more bail-out, and what the state should do to accommodate to Serrano, a decision which held there must not be any difference in the public funds provided for any child's education which arises as a result of the differences in local property tax value, but rather that the whole wealth of the state must be equally represented in public funds supporting education for every child. Supplemental funds for special needs are added on to the base. But Serrano mandated an absolutely equal base for all.*

And there were so many other questions such as where to finance welfare. Local government had been wanting the state to pick up that entire cost. The cities and counties both were just clamoring for some leadership in a thoughtful approach to how they fund. City and county officials are desperate for some predictability about what they're going to do.

I don't suppose any state has as serious a set of problems as we have right now--maybe New York with its responsibility for New York City--over how to fund and how to allocate. What do you do about programs in the future? I think Leo has decided he's going to try to take some leadership on that and, as he does it, he represents a liberal approach toward it; I mean, an approach that says we have to think about who's going to be hurt as the budgets get tighter, but which might not be the way Jerry would say it. I think a lot of the Democratic leadership--maybe not the people, the voters, but the Democratic leadership--wants that view introduced into the decisions about funding.

The media keeps talking about Leo's ambition to be governor, and I think that's just a logical given. But many of his allies and also some of the objective lobbyists I've talked to say, "That's

*See Serrano v. Priest, 483 P.2d 1241 (Cal. 1971).

Leary: the wrong way to go if you're looking for votes." He's going to be the bad guy on a lot of things because he's going to be saying, "You have to take care of the poor and you have to keep some of these programs going. You've got to do something about mental health." And what the public wants to hear is, "We've got to cut back on money, on spending."

So, there's a lot of scepticism about whether this is the way to run for elective office. People were making dramatic statements about, "He's following his conscience no matter where it goes," and things like that. To some extent I think that's correct. So, how he can build that pursuit of policy into a campaign for the governor's office, I don't know.

I just do find an awful lot of people have respect for Leo's toughness. One lobbyist told me, "He knows how to get money for the campaigns, and don't think he doesn't. He knows how to twist arms and make us give. He's just as tough as anybody. He's as tough as Unruh ever was." But they have a feeling that they can trust him. He doesn't play games with them. So, I don't know where that leads to.

One person said they thought that some of the lobby interests, especially some of the big business interests, might be really very anxious to have somebody as governor who would be as predictable and who, whether they agree with him all the time or not, they could sort of trust.

But one person told me about Brown calling an executive of an aerospace company and telling him to put the heat on his own legislator to vote for the constitutional convention issue. And that assemblyman, when called by this biggest, most powerful businessman in his district, said, "How can you possibly demand an absolute no-deficit budget at the federal level when the big money is going to go into your manufacturing field? You're going to cut off the possibility of more defense contracts, and that's where your living [comes from]."¹ And the executive is alleged to have told his assemblyman back, "Oh, but Brown told me that when he's president, space is going to have his first priority."

So, where do we go from here? I don't know. You'd rather go back a few years, wouldn't you?

Nathan: I do think this all ties together on the California continuum. Perhaps just one more question in this area, and then we'll go into the past.

Leary: Sure.

Nathan: I was interested in your view of the way power is allocated or taken within the state. Are you suggesting that if the governor is very assertive and powerful, the speaker is less so? Do you feel that there is some sort of balance that is optimum for the state?

Leary: Oh, there's so much that's just personality that is involved in it that I don't know that you can say--you can't do a formula like a textbook might propose, I don't believe.

Nathan: No. But it's not bad to have legislative leadership in a sense?

Leary: Oh, I think it's wonderful to have legislative leadership, yes. And, in fact, I would think they might vie with each other over a creative approach toward how to solve problems.

The Interim Committee

Leary: I can remember talking to Bob Kenny a long time ago about the origins of state policy, because I saw Earl Warren seeming to be the one who brought everything out. I mean, the policies were laid out from the governor pretty much, and the legislature responded to it. And Kenny got into telling me about how the way you got yourself elected in those days when he was in the senate--he told me when he was attorney general, but he was recalling when he was in the senate--was to get yourself a committee, an interim committee. They didn't have standing committees then; they had the committees just with the sessions. They didn't have committees that ran from session to session. In fact, I think they had a constitutional fight over whether they had the power to appoint interim committees at one stage of the game.

But he said you got yourself an interim committee on some issue that you knew was going to make headlines, and you wanted to get all the press you could get in the state. Then you had to have committee hearings on that issue up and down the state. So, what you needed was an issue that had some appeal in every single place where there was a major newspaper. He said that's why they got into communism, and that's why they got into a lot of inflammatory issues.

His was a labor-related one. I'm trying to think of what it was. I can't remember the major committee that he had, that he ran before announcing that he was going to run for attorney general; he wanted to get a lot of media and a lot of attention.

Leary: Of course, in those days it was not so different from now. If you had in mind a statewide race, you knew two or four years ahead of time that you had to get your name known all over the place. And so he began doing his committee bit.

Well, he talked about it then, and he said, "That is the way, of course--you form legislation by getting in and really analyzing and studying a problem, and then you come up with some concepts of how to approach that problem." And he said, "That's the only way we can take it away from the governor. Otherwise the governor has his departments bringing him what their problems are and asking for legislation to resolve them."

I don't want to go into too specific a thing about it, but it seems to me I got the impression that Kenny was saying that there was an ideal in this, because you needed to have the problems of the various departments come funneling through the governor, proposals on how to remedy things that they saw. But you also needed the legislature out taking quite an objective look at things, maybe that didn't even have a department forum, something that wasn't falling within [a particular department], or maybe the department was so trivial that it couldn't get the governor's ear, and that you could force new solutions to the fore. I remember the Youth Authority began almost out of the blue, from legislative investigation. My paper back at the end of World War II had been very concerned about juvenile crime and reform of its punishment and we covered hearings of legislative committees and suddenly the idea got picked up by other press and pushed. In those days there was more crusading journalism than is customary today and papers campaigned for legislative reform on issues they picked for editorial support.

Nathan: Then the community would come forward in response to some committee inquiry perhaps?

Leary: Yes, yes.

Education Issues##

Nathan: Now, let's see. You were talking in a very interesting way about some of the problems related to education, Serrano and others, and I wondered whether you would like to go back a bit and get into some of the education issues that have caught your attention over the years.

Leary: Well, educationally--I heard [Wilson] Riles on the public television last night and was very disappointed that they didn't give him more chance to talk. I'm always exasperated with television because it doesn't give people enough time. But Riles was expressing a kind of anguish about his feeling that unless the citizenry gets concerned about education now, it can all go down the tube, that we can have a disaster. And I do really feel, as I guess I've mentioned to you, that this is as critical a time, I think, for public education as can be, maybe not in other states. Maybe other states are not focused on it as sharply.

But here we have a convergence of problems and maybe sheer size of the state magnifies the problem of education plus our multiplicity of minorities. And while schools are grappling with the problems of communicating to bilingual students or very ill-prepared students, funding problems have been aggravated by declining population since districts get their state support in proportion to attendance. Palo Alto High School is being closed; it has just been for about two generations the center of life down there, and other schools which have long-revered reputations are being shut down. And then in Los Angeles the education problem is especially acute because a large number of white families opted out for private schools in order to avoid busing their children after the court imposed a busing plan on that district. They were trying to avoid long freeway rides for their children to and from school and to prevent their being sent to districts different from their home environment.

That, coupled with this great wave of economy-mindedness in the public--I find it remarkable as an indication of, for some reason or other, lack of confidence in the school system. In the Depression, when you read about California schools, there was no question but what they had a priority on financing. And when they imposed new taxes in the heart of the Depression, it was primarily for the schools. If you remember, the Riley-Stewart Act was approved by the voters in the heart of the Depression in order to give a bigger state share to the funding of schools.

The interesting thing about California is that from the very beginning--from the very, I think, almost first legislature--there has been an assumption that there was a certain state responsibility toward education.

Nathan: Were you thinking of equalization?

Leary: I'm going ahead of equalization to the very, very first effort. I think it was something like five cents or something like that, whatever the tax rate was; there was a statement of state responsibility.

Leary: I got some of this out of Cloud's book on California education, an early history about it. (Roy W. Cloud was state executive secretary of the California Teachers Association, 1927-47.) I looked into it some and up to the time when--I guess 1920 was the first time that the teachers put an initiative on the ballot. Do you remember that one?

Nathan: I don't recall it.

Leary: It established a minimum state support per ADA [average daily attendance], the principle of the ADA, and gave a large sort of assurance of salary minimum too to teachers. Exactly what that did has to be verified, but that was all in the '20s. Really, there was a pinch economically then after the war and they were able to get this through. But the point that I'm making is that the public has been so supportive, even in times of economic stress, in California for their school system. And then in the '30s, in the middle of the Depression, imposing new taxes which would be for added state support of the schools, and it was teamed with another tax to provide further support for state government in general, the income tax. In view of today's public demand for frugality in government and reduction in taxes, it is interesting that the state income tax came onto the ballot twice as a referendum giving people the chance to remove it and twice they refused to, in the late '30s and '40s.

I'm not sure, in the days when the tax structure for the state, under the Plehn Plan, rested entirely on industry and business and banks and utilities and so forth, how much sensitivity there was to schools then. But I guess that the significance of that 1920 initiative was that it imposed on these business establishments, who were pretty good at forestalling new responsibilities and saying, "Let the local property taxpayers pay for that"--that it imposed on them this burden for the schools.

So, today the school system seems not to have that kind of public faith; maybe that's just part of the whole attitude toward government, that people are disillusioned about government and everything government does, and seem to be in a mood that private enterprise can do it better and private enterprise can move in on schools.

In that context we have the movement for the voucher plan here, which I think could catch on. It'll get into a religious fight, so maybe it won't be successful, but it could. It would have seemed impossible to me at another time, but now it's going to have a run for its money, I think.

Nathan: Yes. That's the Sugarman & Coons proposal, isn't it? [John Coons and Stephen D. Sugarman are both professors of law, U.C. Berkeley, specialists in educational finance. MEL]

Leary: Yes. If they organize and get themselves to signature gathering pretty soon--I don't think they have any money really, and they haven't found an angel yet that wants to support the expense of circulating a petition, and that's basically what they need. They are expected to try again, and some others with even more sweeping plans for public support for youngsters in private schools are considering an initiative.

Now, that kind of ballot issue directed to allocation of state educational funds is going to bring education into sharp focus for public consideration in coming years, it seems to me. It's awfully hard to tell whether some of the money that's been spent on early childhood education, and on the intensified bilingual education, and the special reading and special math courses and so forth, which George Miller established the programs for--it's very hard to find out for sure whether those worked. You can get people who declare they do, and the state, Riles' office, argues that they have.

Nathan: That's early childhood education especially?

Leary: Yes. And I notice that he's also talking very strongly for bilingual education. Bilingual is one of the easy things to oppose in the mood of "Everything is pro-America," because, you know, there is a wide-spread assumption, "If they come here, if they want to be Americans, let them learn English," which is all right, and that's what an awful lot of immigrants did, but it creates some very hard initial years for the kids and for many of them a very unsettling kind of experience.

Then, I don't know whether we're getting in proportionately so many immigrants, especially in California, that it is easy for them to remain reclusive in their own enclaves and very difficult for them to find motivation for conquering the English language. I understand the Chinese adults find it hard to learn English--in fact, I gather it is much harder for Chinese people to learn English and understand it, much harder than for Europeans. Europeans at least started out with the same root. At least some Latin base to most European languages creates a starting point, whereas Chinese have nothing in common with our language and have an awfully hard time, I think.

Nathan: Yes. I gather the South Vietnamese are making a relatively good stab at it.

Leary: Are they?

Nathan: So I gather. But one would imagine they would have some of the same difficulties.

Leary: You'd think so, yes. They write in the same fashion of ideographs instead of using letters. Their whole approach toward thinking is different. Arthur (Professor Arthur Sherry, U.C. Berkeley Law School, emeritus, now teaching at Hastings Law School, my husband) has told me about some law students that he's had from Korea or Vietnam who just find it very difficult to comprehend how you think about law because their ideas are different. They don't have the concepts of equity, of civil rights, of justice, of constitutional protection, which are the ingredients of the legal study, and it stumps some of them in trying to follow Anglo-American jurisprudence. They don't understand how to frame things in philosophical terms, which most Americans and most European background people approach. They don't start out with the same premises.

So, anyway, we're talking about schools and the interesting times they've been the centers of political fights. I would expect that's going to come whether the voucher thing comes on or not. It's the whole question of whether the voucher issue confronts the electorate again or not. The state still has not resolved the financial questions arising out of Serrano, the Supreme Court decision mandating equal funding behind each child, and it hasn't been publicly decided whether that decision can be fully implemented and the implementation be accepted by the people. Rich districts, for instance, are terribly unhappy that they cannot provide funds beyond a common statewide level.

The effort to get equalization in educational funding to bring some balance between very poor school districts and those very rich in what local property taxes yielded was one of the principal political controversies when I first began covering the legislature.

Nathan: Would that be in the late '30s?

Leary: No. In the '30s my understanding is that the issue was one of increasing state support for education--to get it joined as an equal partner with local taxpayers, and that's why the Riley-Stewart sales tax plan was adopted. But in the '40s the issue of equalization was hot. Dr. George Strayer, of Columbia University School of Education, one of the nationally recognized experts in school finances, was hired in 1944 by a legislative committee. He proposed a wide variety of improvements, especially to bring up school teacher salaries, but his report catapulted the issue of equalization into the political scene because it unsettled many school districts to have attention drawn to their property tax advantages.

Nathan: That was about '47 when he started, wasn't it?

Leary: Yes. There may have been talk about it in '45. And why that boiled up after the war probably--do you remember the Lanham Act money? The federal government was already recognizing that the war had impacted certain areas by drawing war workers here--Vallejo was a big example of it--and had said they would recognize that they had to give some support to schools or generally to all local government because they had forced the rapid increase of population, and so they had magnified problems beyond what the local government would normally be able to support.

I think that concept during the war must have drawn attention of people to the fact that here you had terribly fast growing metropolitan areas with much bigger problems than they could cope with, and there ought to be somebody funneling money in to help. Now, I suspect that the demand for equalization came kind of out of that, though maybe when teachers came back from the war--of course, I suppose in those days so many of the teachers were female that they were not in war, but they had gone off to better jobs, to war industry, to some extent. When they began looking around for jobs again, the difference in salaries between the metropolitan areas and the rural areas must have been frightening to them, and I would suppose that the rural areas were reluctant to make any accommodation upward.

So, concern about salaries was strong, but concern about adequate funds for school districts in general was the big concern of the CTA (California Teachers Association) and they were politically strong at this period. They had a powerful lobby in Sacramento looking for ways to improve schools, meaning how to improve the teachers' salaries, which it's easy to pillory as an improper way to help the schools, but there is some fundamental justification for it. Through the past sixty years or so salary level has been taken as a measure, maybe the key measure, of school quality, and the political push for additional revenue, intended to improve salaries, has always been argued in Sacramento as a revenue needed to improve the quality of education. The legislators are quite able to justify higher salaries for legislators as improving quality.

Nathan: Right!

Leary: So maybe the same argument applies to teachers reasonably. But that was a very big fight, the Strayer Report and the very serious struggle between rich and poor communities, the rich trying to protect the school resources they'd developed and the poor wanting a share. The formulae for allocating state money for education got very complicated indeed as they worked out ways to weight various

Leary: factors--support for busing, for athletics, for special programs, all seized upon as ways to counter some losses "rich" communities would suffer in the average daily attendance base. It got very technical, because they had to confront the different needs of different communities. In that San Francisco did a brilliant and adroit job of fighting for its small area and small population.

Nathan: Who led that fight from San Francisco? Can you recall?

Leary: Well, Don Cleary was the lobbyist at that time. He had been a reporter for the Chronicle and became official lobbyist in Sacramento for San Francisco. In those days not too many cities had their own lobbyists--but Los Angeles did, and San Francisco.

Don had the good sense to know that he wasn't going to spend his time figuring out the financial details. And they brought in Oscar Anderson, who had a position at San Francisco City College; he was brought into the lobbying job by Cleary to help represent San Francisco's interests. (I think Oscar Anderson either is quite ill or died relatively recently. I'm not sure.) But he had a predecessor who was a specialist in school finance.

The Los Angeles school lobbyist then was the father of Mildred Younger; his name was Ray Eberhard. He was terribly bright and generally trusted; I'm not sure whether trustworthy, but a generally trusted guy. And by that I mean that when he would make an arrangement that so-and-so was what the bill actually meant and would do, people would trust him and not feel that there was a hook in there that he wasn't telling about. He fought for the Los Angeles school system and lobbied for them. I think he had been a principal. I think he came up out of the school system.

He and Don Cleary used to clash, of course, about how to get San Francisco cut in. That was a sheer case of lobbying paying off, because Don had an almost unlimited expense account. It was clearly understood that the millions he could bring to the city if he got a good school agreement which would not cut San Francisco off too closely were worth whatever thousands he would pay for drinks and dinners. He had an extremely charming, genial, hearty kind of manner that went over well in the lobby and with the legislators. He was able to fight for lots of money that San Francisco otherwise might not have had, and at a time when San Francisco's political power--its legislators were not particularly esteemed except for a few, and its vote power was so small, but he made up by lobbying.

Leary: That was the period when San Francisco's delegation, primarily Democratic, consisted of a number of people with modest talent who had emerged from the Olson era: Edward Gaffney, Bernard Brady, Cliff Berry, who was kind of hand-picked by labor, but they all had labor support and responded to whatever party strength Bill Malone, Democratic leader in San Francisco, could put together. However, one of these solid Democrats was an attorney, George Collins, who was a rather remote, austere loner, a determined liberal but one of the most conscientious men I've ever encountered. George Collins was a man who actually read the bills and knew what they would do. When he would rise to combat a bill, people all over the assembly, even those likely to laugh at his meticulous dogged pursuit of Olson-era ideals, would pay attention because he could often spot some really crooked deal behind a bill. The strong person in the delegation was Al Wollenberg, who was a major legislative support for Warren. And the most effective member of the San Francisco delegation was Tommy Maloney, a Republican, strongly labor, but so well liked and respected he could swing votes in both houses.

Nathan: Oh, yes. Those were important names.

Now, perhaps, to move along to your other interests?

Notes on Urban and Regional Development

Leary: I picked up some things [paging through materials] about which I had some rough files from the era of Knight and so on.

Nathan: Good.

Leary: But I find that nothing is comprehensive. One of the problems is that during the early '50s I got very involved in urban development and city planning stuff and so forth, and was writing a lot about that, and did some tours of other cities like Pittsburgh, and went to Toronto because of their transit system, and Philadelphia, Washington, New York, and Chicago--particularly Chicago, their waterfront development--to say, "How were other cities taking hold of their development for the future?"

I had been extremely interested in the rapid transit concept that ultimately developed into BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit). I remember when the very first discussion of it came up to the legislature. In fact, I haven't gone back to ask them, but I believe that it really began out of conversations between Cyril Magnin and Marvin Lewis, I'm told, who used to walk down from Nob Hill together in the mornings, talking about traffic and San Francisco's future and so forth.

Nathan: I thought you were going to say Adrien Falk because of his BART presidency.

Leary: Well, that would be reasonable. Adrien Falk came into it later. And Adrien Falk was an outstanding person in my view as a civic leader, a person of great sensitivity and a person who cared a great deal about his community and gave a lot of his own attention to the community.

But Cyril Magnin was too. And in those early days, Cyril was in on a lot of things that were going on, just giving his two cents' worth, at the same time that the store was growing so fast. Cyril Magnin was the creative and very effective head of a women's clothing store but so interested in city affairs he gave lots of time to City Hall. Marvin Lewis, an attorney, was a city/county supervisor about this time or earlier. Adrien Falk was president of S & W Foods, one of San Francisco's big industries in those days.

At any rate, they got a group of some business people to take seriously the idea of: "How is San Francisco going to endure the flood of traffic that's already coming in from the Golden Gate Bridge and the Bay Bridge? We can't possibly do it." The figures were coming out about what percentage of downtown Los Angeles was given over to automobile parking, most of it on the surface. They hadn't yet begun many multiple-level parking facilities.

But, of course, earlier than that Florence McAuliffe, a San Francisco attorney and powerful political figure in the Angelo Rossi mayoralty period, had been one of the leaders in the undergrounding of the garage under Union Square, which was the first underground multi-level garage, I believe the first in this country, and the finances of that were interesting. I don't know the details, but it was a public bond issue with a lot of argument about whether you could use public land, such as the park, for something which would be a remunerative private enterprise type thing. They worked out a kind of a revenue bond concept at a time when I think that sort of funding was a new instrument and was a very successful instrument for a lot of cities to use in trying for their urban development.

But this worry about compact little San Francisco and the automobile launched this idea about rapid transit. And I laugh now about everybody giving BART such a hard time. It was just hooted at, the idea that you'd ever get people out of the automobile. They'd never come to San Francisco if they couldn't drive into San Francisco.

Nathan: How did you pick up on this notion? Do you remember?

Leary: Well, the bills were introduced, I think by Gerald O'Gara, the state senator then; the bills were introduced in the legislature.

Nathan: And you were covering the legislature?

Leary: I was covering the legislature. The significant thing was that there were bills to begin a study and that they very sensibly insisted that it cover all the counties, not be just a San Francisco measure. They went around and got the support of legislators, enough legislators anyway to get the thing through. They got initial state money for a study, and I think in that very first time each county had to put up something too so that there was an involvement from the beginning. I felt then and still feel that the degree of local participation generated for BART from the first planning funds to the final bond issue was an extremely interesting and important political development.

I think it was not unrelated that during this same era of local sharing in BART plans on a regional basis the Supervisors Association and the League of California Cities together launched ABAG--Association of Bay Area Governments, a voluntary group of cities and counties to discuss regional problems. It did not become a real regional government. In fact, I always felt it was created by those two groups to thwart moves towards regional government and to make sure cities and counties maintained their own strong voices. But it has been a significant forum and I think cooperation of the various governments around the Bay in planning BART gave it a good start. Interestingly, when planning got underway for where BART's lines should run and stations should be, this became the first regional planning ever undertaken and local communities could see--as some did--that they were planning a sewer outfall just where the next-door neighbor town was planning a beach resort, that sort of thing.

Anyway, there was a good deal of political pride in the area that they had shared in developing BART from the very start, and it was part of the system's success. Most other cities sat back and waited for Washington to provide funds for transit. Los Angeles never could get that much regional support. Of course, about that same time San Francisco was so supportive of the transit idea it rejected federal money for a freeway connection between the Golden Gate Bridge and the Bay Bridge. That really stirred a lot of national attention, saying "no" to millions or maybe billions.

Well, the great concern was what was happening to cities. And some of the most interesting writing that was going on--you remember this--was on urban development and what was the value of cities versus the value of going out to the suburbs. And since the San Francisco News' circulation was primarily within San Francisco, it was logical for our paper to be very concerned about the urban

Leary: situation, whereas the Chronicle, of course, or the Examiner, with large circulations outside, did not get themselves policy-wise as committed to this.

And then I guess I just liked planners. I thought city planners were great! They're interesting and lively.

So, I got into this. I was back at Harvard in '45-'46 and there were lots of opportunities there to do some attending of planning classes, but I noticed that I didn't do it. I didn't follow them very much. Obviously, I was more interested in other things that had to do with government, or even a couple of courses in law, I mean, Constitutional Law. I took Roscoe Pound on the Introductions to Common Law; and another course in Legal Foundations of the American Political System, McIlwain the professor. I found things of that kind very interesting. I did go around to the government people who were active in immediate current government problems, but I was a little bit more interested in sort of taking the advantage of the philosophical approach toward law.

So, I say that as a prelude to the fact that my own personal contact--I had some with the Knight and the Brown administrations, but I was at that stage kind of involved in this urban stuff.

Impressions of Knight

Leary: Knight was somebody that I had come to know when he was lieutenant governor.

Nathan: I'd love to hear more about him as a doer and a thinker and just a person.

Leary: He was sort of a charmer more than anything else. He was a lively, attractive, warm, nice kind of person. He had this funny little way of breaking into a tap dance kind of thing every now and then. That book about him by the New York Times guy, Gladwin Hill, Dancing Bear, has a lot about Knight and about that era, and Hill makes little jokes about Knight's doing his little step. He obviously learned how to do some kind of little tap dance step and he enjoyed doing it. I thought initially the book referred to Knight or maybe to his political style, which consisted of a dextrous ability to dance between Democratic and Republican interests.

Nathan: Knight had a sort of ebullience?

Leary: Yes. And he was a good companion. He told wonderful stories. I think I told you about one of them. He had the ability to be a raconteur. And one did not particularly think of him as even as serious a weight as his previous judgeship would have suggested. But I think he was a more serious man than he pretended to be, and some of this was a deliberate political front that he had learned to develop.

I always felt that he knew how to manage his relations with labor very well. And I'm sure you've heard others tell about his commitment after he'd been appointed--I mean, after he'd succeeded Warren, but before his election--his commitment on unemployment insurance to the labor convention when he made a speech to them and flatly promised that there would be an increase in unemployment insurance.

Nathan: And his position on right-to-work, for example?

Leary: And, well, his position on right-to-work. He was simply not going--well, this, of course, was before it came to a focus in '58.

Nathan: Right. This would be closer to '54.

Leary: I'm thinking of '54, when he really insured his election, it seemed to me, when, coming from the Republican side, coming with Warren's mantle, as it were, for moderate Republicans, he then made the open move or bid for labor support. He just cut the ground out from under--was that when Richard Graves ran?

Nathan: I think it was, yes.

Leary: I think so. It's kind of interesting that I have just been talking about cities, but there was Graves, out of the League of California Cities, who was brilliant and understood a lot about government and had very canny perceptions about the state and power and the way things were done, but he had no sense at all of his own image as a candidate.

Nathan: Had he ever run for office before?

Leary: No.

Nathan: So, to run first for governor is interesting too.

The Urban Point of View##

Leary: Let's see whether any of this file has any pertinence. [tape off briefly] What I've just come across is stuff about freeway development. This was part of this whole BART development, part of the whole approach toward rapid transit. San Francisco's rebellion against freeways was also one of the significant things that was going on at that time and part of this effort to assert the urban point of view, which I guess ultimately brought about the restructuring of the senate.

Nathan: Oh, yes, of course.

Leary: The senate got reapportioned in 1964 on the basis of one man, one vote, so that it was no longer dominated by rural interests. Prior to the change, so that population was more appropriately reflected in the senate, Los Angeles and the other southern counties, despite their population, could often be stymied in their political aims by northern senators, since the number of northern counties was greater. They did give southern senators larger staffs, even back in the '40s, recognizing their greater constituency. But things changed a lot in California after the senate was reapportioned: urban issues became important. But the clamor for greater attention to urban problems was evident all through the war years.

I can remember Senator Earl Desmond of Sacramento talking privately with me and very heatedly about the evil of childcare centers, that this was the Communist style for getting the state to control the children and to break up the family. How much he really believed it, I'm very sceptical about, but it was a line that he and Tenney and many of the others asserted. I felt, having talked to a lot of mothers in developing stories and so forth about these childcare centers, which were a very hot issue in San Francisco, that there was a very legitimate need for childcare centers.

Nathan: You were thinking then of state-supported childcare centers?

Leary: Yes, yes. Because the number of women working in wartime factories and in wartime jobs of all kinds--the first time women were driving trucks, the first time women were doing all kinds of things. And the need for them meant that an awful lot of women really were desperate to know how to take care of their children. You didn't have the money around for private centers, and you didn't have the custom of it enough. And so many of the women were new to the area, had come here because their husbands were shipping out, and then they were trying to get jobs. They didn't know how to bring

Leary: their neighbors into a plan, and in an urban area like San Francisco it isn't as easy as in a suburban area to say, "Let's have a co-op childcare center." So, the demand was, "The state [should] hurry up and provide them so that we can continue to work."

That was just one of the issues that focused on what urban needs were, and Sacramento was still rural; at least Desmond was still rural in his alliances. Senators like George Hatfield, Ben Hulse, Bill Rich, Bradford Crittenden from Stockton, Jesse Mayo, Charles Brown--the stalwarts of that day were powerful men from rural areas. Chris Jesperson. The rural senators were not attuned to urban problems at all. They thought in terms of a rural economy which was the state's mainstay.

Graves, Knight, and Warren

Leary: I think that this pressure for "pay attention to them" was part of what Graves was trying to dramatize, and he thought there was enough there to run on. He was a terribly likeable person on a one-to-one or small group basis, but I think he had very little (except academic) ability on a platform. He was perfectly good to make a speech to a group that was willing to sit and listen to him talk about problems of the cities, but he had almost no sense of how to communicate that to the average voter. Graves came out of the University of California, a protégé of Professor Sam May, as I recall it, and he became, as head of the League of California Cities, very well informed about the changes occurring in California's population, but he didn't know how to convert that into vote-appeal.

Nathan: That's very interesting. Yes, he was rational, but not very emotive somehow.

Leary: Not at all. You're right. I do remember also that it was an extremely poor campaign financially.

Nathan: Yes.

Leary: I can remember the public relations guy telling me that he walked to the newspaper offices to take the press releases around because he literally didn't have the money for stamps, which is funny.

Nathan: Yes!

Leary: I don't know enough about what was going on in the Democratic party at that stage to know how it got off on such a lame leg, but it had trouble.

Nathan: This is speculation--but didn't we still have cross-filing? And there was not a powerful Democratic structure because Warren had in a sense dominated?

Leary: Yes, yes, for sure. To run as a Democrat--my goodness, Kenny didn't even carry his own party's nomination, and I guess that was the last time around. So, the party was just demoralized totally.

Knight might have presented himself so you could say, "Well, he is Republican, but he's not Earl Warren any more." But he made his bid with labor so early and so successfully that there was almost nothing left for Richard Graves.

Nathan: In reading through some of your wonderful files in The Bancroft Library--and I do want to talk about those later--reading Knight's statements now gave me an entirely different perspective on him.

Leary: Is that so?

Nathan: Yes. He sounded thoughtful, liberal in sort of the old-fashioned sense.

Leary: I think he was genuinely liberal in the sense that--[pauses] he was not as thoughtful a man as Earl Warren, and he was not as broad a person, and I think he had not probably been tested as much. Warren had gone through the district attorney's campaigns and run the office in Alameda County in a very challenging time, up against strong local interests, and knew more about looking ahead and projecting a set of goals he wanted to achieve. I didn't think of Knight as so purposeful. He just had savvy about how to deal with people, so that he could keep the conservatives with him--not the ultra-conservatives, because, of course, Tom Werdel and the others ran a slate of Republican convention delegates against him in '52. Werdel pulled a number of conservative Republicans together, particularly the independent oil people, the Bill Keck people, who were out to get Warren.

But Goody Knight was so likeable and amiable, and he was not a person who was going to adopt an inhuman position. He was sensitive to human values; and so I think he made a lot of sense to a lot of Democrats at that stage.

Nathan: Did you feel that any or very much of the oil money tended to flow toward him as the better of the two from the oil interests' point of view?

Leary: Between which two?

Nathan: Graves and Knight.

Leary: Oh, I think that would be logical, yes. I think they knew him; he'd been around. Nobody knew what Graves would be like. And I think that the big interests tend to prefer the evil known [chuckles] to the untried, and they were not about to let all those kooky Democrats get in anyway. You know, you couldn't tell where they would go.

So, I think to some extent Knight played the Warren game of playing both sides and bringing them into a kind of harmony.

You know, I have no idea where the initiative came from on the Knowland position. But the book about the Los Angeles Times--

Nathan: Thinking Big?

Leary: Thinking Big. Have you read it?

Nathan: I have, yes.

Knowland's Moves

Leary: [It] seemed to me it does not give enough attention to the Times' interest in the right-to-work law and where that came in with Knowland. My recollection is that it suggests that Knowland kind of started this and presented himself and so then had to maneuver around about how to get rid of Knight or what to do with Knight.

Nathan: What is your hunch? That the impetus may have come from the Chandlers in some sense?

Leary: Yes, or at least that it grew out of their getting together. My feeling is that the Chandlers may very well have thought so with the wave of right-to-work laws across the country and the kind of anti-labor, I guess, sentiment that was around. I think the Chandlers must have resented Knight's support of labor. I have no evidence of this. Maybe reading the stories in the Times at that time would show. But I would believe they must have been shocked by how far toward labor's camp Knight moved, cannily recognizing what the war had done to swell labor's ranks here and that he had to have them.

But, anyway, they [Knowland and the Times] made a peace together. I have no idea where I got such a strong sense that it had come from the Times, that they had tempted Knowland. But I did feel that Joe Knowland didn't necessarily want his son to come back to the

Leary: Tribune, that it wasn't necessarily a big desire for him that he come back. There's been a lot of talk, you know, that Joe wanted him to come back and take over the paper and so forth.

Nthan: But old Joe Knowland was still hale, wasn't he?

Leary: Yes.

Nathan: And powerful?

Leary: And he hated Nixon. He just hated Nixon. I think he felt if Bill stayed back there in Washington that he could have countered Nixon, that he could have risen to be more important than Nixon, and I think he rather fancied that Bill might be president and not Nixon. Now, whether they thought governors are easier to run for the presidency from than Senators--and so that may have been part of his father's idea too--I don't know.

Nathan: Did you have occasion to interview either Joe or Bill Knowland as time went by?

Leary: Oh, yes. Bill. However, I talked to Joe quite a lot, and I don't know why that was. I think I tried to talk to him about politics basically. [leafing through files and materials]

[reading from article] "In California something extraordinary occurred in the June 3 party primary. Bill Knowland not only won his own party nomination; he captured the majority--" Oh!
[telephone ringing]

Nathan: This is your day! [laughter] [tape off briefly during telephone interruption]

Leary: [This was] apparently a piece that I did about Knowland.
[glancing down at article] Oh, my! It's long.

Nathan: You were covering state and national politics at this time?

Leary: Yes. And I probably did this, this carbon, to try to offer it to a magazine of some sort. Whether I sold it or not, I don't even remember. I used to write a bit for The Reporter then. Do you remember that?

Nathan: Yes, I do. Did you keep carbons of everything that you wrote?

Leary: I kept a lot. And I have, I discovered, some files down there that pick up some of the things in the '60s that I did. I discovered that I have quite a few carbons of stuff that I did, but not everything.

Nathan: That was wise, really.

Leary: Here's a speech by Knowland--1947.

Nathan: He was still U.S. Senator then, wasn't he?

Leary: Yes. Oh, yes. Before the Commonwealth Club. [continuing to page through materials] And Earl Warren announcing the appointment of Major William F. Knowland, from Verne Scoggins, press secretary. Has he been interviewed?

Nathan: Yes, on the Warren Oral History Project.

Leary: [continuing to look through files and materials] My goodness, I've even got some handwritten notes here for--well, this appears to be my file on Bill Knowland.

Nathan: I was just curious about how early he started talking about the China question, the whole China lobby context. Did that come early in his career?

Leary: I think it did. Here I have a speech, 1950: "Necessity for Combatting Aggressive Communism in Asia." So, this answers your question.

Nathan: Beautifully!

Leary: At least that early he was. And here is a picture, "Knowland meets with Chiang Kai-shek in Formosa in November, 1950," and it's from Fortnight. Do you remember that magazine? You don't know Fortnight?

Nathan: Fortnight? The name's familiar.

Leary: It was a little magazine published in San Francisco for a while.

[finds another article] And this--February 5, 1951: "Knowland has been urging this nation to take a firm anti-Communist stand in the Orient since long before the Reds overran that country. He was early in the fight, and it's typical of him to be ahead." So then it goes on about him. [continues reading, now from a subsequent portion of the article] "Two years ago the Reds were on their way to conquering China, but Knowland was publicly insisting that we could still get in there and help. By April of '49, with China's fate all but sealed, Knowland was urging this country to send American arms to South Korea if that territory was not to be overrun by the Communists."

So, this tells you about how early he got into the thing, and it may even have been earlier than that.

Nathan: I was just thinking of his interest in becoming governor of California. His interests were primarily international, in my recollection. Or was that not quite so?

Leary: Well, I kind of feel that he must have made the decision that the way to become president was to get himself [in] as governor and that that was how to get enough media attention, that things were not falling his way fast enough. And, let's see. Where was Nixon at this stage of the game? Nixon was Eisenhower's vice-president. My feeling is that he [Knowland] thought that he was under Nixon's shadow in Washington and that he could establish his own base and make a kind of fresh start at the presidency if he came here and undercut Nixon's support in the State of California, so that when they would go into a convention he would be able to have the votes from the California delegation and take them away from Nixon.

Nathan: How did he impress you: as a charismatic or not a charismatic person?

Leary: Bill Knowland?

Nathan: Yes.

Leary: Ah, Bill Knowland was heartbreaking because he was so gauche socially, so unable to relate to people, so uptight. Part of this, of course, I'm stressing from when he was in the latter part of his life, when he was here in the paper, when he was outside of politics. When he had a position--and he always had a position, really, from being very young in the legislature, where he could sort of sound off and be pompous, which he was, and be pontifical in what he would say. So, he kind of filled this role well. He had presence, and when he came into a room everybody knew that he had arrived and was attendant upon what he would say. So, he could go on making speeches, which is about the way he did. But he was the kind of person who was awkward in a situation of just passing the time of day, and I think maybe he was forced into this public role all the time and was sort of living up to a pattern that he was supposed to be filling rather than enjoying it.

Nathan: Could he bring people together as some others have been able to do, reconcile differences, or build a group?

Leary: I saw him at the convention in '48 when he was handling Earl Warren's efforts to get the presidency, and then [Warren] did get the vice-presidency, in the Republican nomination. He [Knowland] held the delegation together, and he had quite a bit of command at that time, yes. But I always felt that it was really Warren's command and that he was acting for Warren and that it was Warren

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Mary Ellen Leary on cover of *Fortnight*, March 12, 1948.

Leary: that people were responding to rather than Knowland. On the other hand, he worked hard and diligently, and he was faithful to his word; I think he was very meticulous about that.

I've heard people who knew him in the legislature say that he was quite a good and rather sympathetic legislator; that he even had a few issues that were kind of liberal; that some of the measures that he carried on the floor of the assembly, especially in his very first years, were sensitive to the needs of the Depression time and so forth; and that he showed understanding of the process and learned it fast and knew how to get along. I think he probably, as a legislator, knew well how to get along with people and how to find out what their interests were and how he could help them so that they could help him, that sort of thing.

I don't think of him as a person who would sit down and talk out with you a different point of view and bring you around to his point of view. I kind of think of him as a bit dogmatic about what he thought. But if he didn't talk you around, at least he would make lots of speeches to you about what he felt. He grew into stronger and stronger convictions about his own point of view about things too.

I think he was personally committed to the China lobby thing; I think he really was sold on it. Now, how much of it was personal ties, where he felt that people that he had obligations to or knew something about wanted this, and how much of it came out of--maybe it was about the first issue that he got really interested in and into as he was serving in the Senate. I don't know. When did I say the date of his appointment was? [leafs through documents]

Nathan: Was that the '40s?

Leary: Yes. Let's see. [paging through materials] Well, there's no date on that, the announcement of his appointment. Here it is. Forty-seven, anyway, talking to the Commonwealth Club [reads from Knowland's Commonwealth Club speech]: "Two years ago this month, as Senator-designate, I had the privilege of speaking..." All right. So, '45.

Nathan: Now, he replaced--

Leary: Hiram Johnson.

Nathan: Hiram Johnson. It's strange because I think of Hiram Johnson as having been so far in the past.

Leary: Yes, I know.

Nathan: He [Knowland], of course, was named by Warren. Was this a part of Warren's relationship with Joe Knowland?

Leary: Oh, yes. Sure. Oh, yes. Nobody ever had any doubt about it. "Some Republican party circles," and I'm reading from a UPI [United Press International] thing here, "including the party central committee in San Francisco have urged Warren to arrange for his own appointment to the Senate or to appoint Lieutenant Governor Frederick F. Houser. It was believed, however, he preferred to serve out his term and seek re-election." So, then there's a lot of stuff about how [resumes quoting from article] "William Knowland, son of Joe Knowland, is seen as another possibility." And then a whole bunch of--: [mentions other men suggested as possibilities in the article] Raymond Haight--no way. Frank Dougherty, attorney and close friend of Johnson. Lloyd Wright. Warren would never have named Lloyd Wright, because Lloyd Wright had joined the crowd that became anti-Warren and was very conservative. Goodwin Knight. Et cetera.

Nathan: I see.

Leary: I wish I could give you some real insight into how he got into the China policy, but I don't have it. Perhaps you've picked it up from others.

Nathan: Well, that was just one part of his story, which is not specifically the California focus anyway.

Leary: Well, it does have--I think you spoke to me once, or someone did, about the possibilities of how much California people or people here related to the Soong family may have had an influence on the policy.

Nathan: It wasn't I, but it's a good question.

Leary: The Soong family had relatives living in the East Bay and prominent in Piedmont and in Berkeley and in some financial circles, which I can't identify. But I know one person who might even be willing to speculate a little bit about that thing because he knew the Soongs. That was Judge Lloyd Burke, who happened to live next door to, and may still live next door to, somebody who is related to the Soong family--charming, very wealthy.

And I had wondered whether the initial idea about interesting himself and feeling that it's logical to get into this might have come from people that he [Knowland] met here in his own community.

Nathan: Very interesting, yes.

Leary: So, it could be worth pursuing.

Nathan: Definitely.

Leary: You might find out something about it.*

Now, Warren clearly was repaying Joe Knowland for a lot of support in the early times, but my guess is he was also laying some lines for his own future. It would be better to have somebody, the United States Senator, whom he could trust and had a long relationship with back in Washington if Warren was thinking about where he was going. Clearly he was thinking about running for the presidency--get re-elected [as governor] and then move on in that way.

Nathan: And presumably Warren was trying to contain the far right, although--

Leary: Yes.

Nathan: --in the final analysis he couldn't quite?

Leary: No. But he would not want somebody from the far right--and he didn't owe them anything.

Nathan: No.

Leary: He didn't need to cultivate any of them. So, he wanted somebody whom he could rely on as a trustworthy person. And I'm sure he wouldn't even have to express that to Bill if he was there.

Nathan: Right. Well, I was thinking also of Knight's relationship to important media people, Joe Knowland and the Chandlers. He wasn't too well supported by either, essentially not supported by either.

Leary: Yes, yes. Well, from the Chandlers' point of view, I believe that he sacrificed them a great deal on the labor thing. And it would really be interesting to see how the Los Angeles Times handled the story of his going before the annual AFL-CIO federation convention and saying to them that he was going to oppose right-to-work--

*In a telephone conversation with the interviewer, Judge Burke gave his impression that Senator Knowland's interest in and views on China preceded his contact with the Piedmont Soongs.

Leary: something that they had been trying to get and had not been able to get through the legislature. Well, I just would imagine that the Times would have said something to indicate their displeasure about it.

I remember having a conversation with Governor Knight about his relations with Mayor Elmer Robinson and how much he trusted Robinson or something to that effect, and I recall being surprised at how forthright and open Knight was. We went to lunch together at a little restaurant near the capitol and I reported back to the News' editor Frank Clarvoe and associate editor Paul Edwards. Sorry I can't recall the content of that mission.

Christopher and the Understanding with Knight

Leary: Now, I think I told you that I was with George Christopher at the time when Knight announced--well, this was in '57 and before the '58 campaign when the switch came.

Nathan: Yes. Now, you were accompanying Christopher on a tour?

Leary: Yes. Christopher was back in Greece visiting, and it was the first time he had been able to go back.

Nathan: Was he still mayor of San Francisco?

Leary: He was mayor.

##

Leary: Before he went, Christopher announced that he was going to run for the Senate, and he told us that he had gone up to Sacramento and talked with Knight to make sure that this was all right with Knight and that there was not going to be any conflict. He said that he had not gotten a commitment of support from Knight, but that he had gotten it clear that Knight didn't know anybody else who was going to run that he would rather have.

Nathan: Was a group of newspaper people traveling with him?

Leary: Two only, the Call-Bulletin man, Maurice Sheehan, and I. (Maury Sheehan later was named by Mayor Christopher to be San Francisco lobbyist in Washington and served many years.) And in the course of things he told us this. Sheehan did not go with George down to see his village. I went alone. He stayed in Athens, had done a lot of the other tour. This was about a three- or four-day little tour which I'm very glad I didn't miss because it was interesting.

Leary: We were going through these little towns on the way to Ios Patros, which is St. Peter, where he was born. Every place he went, he was greeted with people turning out and the school bands and things like that, because at that point, prior to the disreputable vice-president that we had, Christopher had reached the highest position of a Greek-born in public life in America, and so he was on a triumphant tour.

We went into this little town where everybody greeted him and he made speeches and people made speeches, but they kept telling him there was a phone call for him. He got into the schoolhouse to try to talk on the telephone, and meanwhile the kids' band was playing out in the hall, and it was really terrible, very difficult to hear. At that point the call for him was from the United States, from California, to tell him about the switch of things, that Knight was probably going to run--wasn't announced, wasn't sure yet--but Knight was probably going to run for the Senate, and that Knowland was going to run for the governorship.

He was just livid, just furious, because he felt that he had this all buttoned down, or he wouldn't have been away out of the state at the time. I think he was probably more open then with me about it because he was right in the middle of being so outraged, and he said that he did not really think that was going to happen. He thought he had what was pretty firm from Knight and, I guess, wondered what pressures had come onto Knight that he would have to accede to.

Nathan: Did he speculate at all?

Leary: I don't remember. I don't remember that.

Nathan: Well, this was a rather nice little story for you to have.

Leary: Yes. And I don't even know whether I wrote it. I must have written it!

Nathan: I wondered how you would handle it. Would you go posthaste back to Athens and cable, or what would you do?

Leary: [pauses to think] Well, his reaction--I'm sure I moved something about his being outraged against Knight on it, but there was no way for me to get to any kind of wire service then. It was even very difficult to get telephones, because this was an area where the Communists had come in and torn out roads, bridges, and all kinds of power lines in Greece. We went into one village where he wanted to see some elderly aunt and we were there at night. It was a small place where everybody met us with lanterns and flashlights

Leary: to take us from where the car stopped up to his aunt's. They all said, "We used to have electricity in town, but we don't have it any more because the Communists took it out." So, this was '57; this was soon after that.

The white crosses were on the hill as we came into Sparta, which the drivers identified as the place where the Communists had brought all of the leading people of Sparta--the newspaper people, the doctors, the lawyers, and so forth--and assassinated them on that hill. So, the memory of that period was still very alive.

So, I couldn't have sent a wire, but I did send a story from Athens because I could get to Western Union there. I had to get clearance, but I'd gotten through, from their censorship thing. I had to have a note or something like that, which I had, that showed that I could file. It was interesting.

Nathan: Yes!

Leary: Now, that episode meant that something happened in there along the line to really change what was going on.

There was a funny thing. Knight had a check in his pocket for money, a commitment for funding.

Nathan: To run for governor again?

Leary: Yes. And there was a certain amount of "Could he make it?" because I think some of the extra-conservative Republicans were not happy with him and were looking for somebody else. And there was an air of--well, maybe this was earlier on, whether he would run against Warren or something like that. I guess it was earlier, and would he run against Warren? He was the kind of person who would go around and say, "Look, I have this kind of commitment. I'll show you this check for \$10,000. As soon as I get just a little bit more I'm going to add to it and I'm ready to go." And he would show you something like that. Unfortunately, I didn't remember whose check it was.

Nathan: He had his thumb over the signature?

Leary: Yes, sort of like that.

Nathan: There was some comment among your papers that he was in a very strong position politically; he was the governor of the state; he didn't have to allow himself to be crowded like that.

Leary: Yes.

Nathan: Again, speculation on why he didn't take a stronger stand.

Leary: I think he was not that kind of a person. Partly, of course, he didn't have a firm enough base. I mean, he never felt confident that he had power. I really think that. He gave one that impression anyway, whereas Warren always gave you the sense that he held the power, and he would recognize that there were others who had power, but he had power. Knight never came through with the feeling that he was a powerful person who knew how to use it for his own benefit and to advance anything.

Knowland's Campaign for Governor

Nathan: How about Bill Knowland?

Leary: Well, Bill was full of his own sense of power. But when he came into the state to campaign for governor, he was out of his depth. He didn't know the state that well and didn't know people, and he had to begin, and you almost felt that it was a sort of a demeaning role; he was so pompous in his style that it would seem demeaning for him to make this approach toward little country newspaper people, and to go into hick towns, and to go to Watsonville, and to go up to Ukiah. He would know the newspaper people, of course, and he would know one or two or three party leaders of these areas. But the idea of having to really work to get coverage as governor was--remember his wife and daughters all got together and campaigned with him in order to make the media pitch, to present a photogenic kind of an appeal. Everybody was very aware that it was hard. There were no humor stories, no light stories; it was hard to turn Bill Knowland into a human interest kind of a person.

Of course, at that time I remember going to a labor meeting in San Mateo that was called for northern California people to talk about right-to-work. I came away feeling that it was one of the most dramatic and telling indications of what was going to happen that I had ever seen ahead of a thing, of an event. I just was confident that Knowland was going to be defeated on the right-to-work thing then, because there was a strong spirit through this labor group and much more determination and a much bigger turnout than I'd ever seen in any kind of political rally of any sort. And there was a real recognition that Knowland coupled with right-to-work called for a labor political involvement that was beyond anything done before, and they were ready to do it.

Nathan: And that really turned the labor effort more pointedly, didn't it?

Leary: Oh, yes. They got out and worked. They cared. They felt a very, very real individual personal interest in that campaign, and I think that made the difference. Joe Knowland's paper used to have a picture of Pat Brown with a dog collar around it [laughter], and "labor's stooge," you know. Pat was not so much "labor's stooge" as just that labor was violently against Knowland. There was no doubt labor supported Pat Brown and that got him in, of course, just as labor has supported Jerry Brown too.

Nathan: Well, perhaps in a future session we can talk a little bit more about your coverage of labor as an element in society. It seems to me you have covered quite a bit of the labor efforts when you were--

Leary: Well, yes. In Sacramento--the News was a working man's paper, and I was very aware of it.

Nathan: Yes.

Leary: In fact, it started out so much as a working man's paper that they say people not south of Market, but north of Market, used to hide it so that nobody would know they were carrying it, people who came from the other side of Market.

II WRITING FOR NEWSPAPERS

[Interview 2: March 23, 1979]##

Specialized News Service: PNS

Nathan: I know you worked for the San Francisco News from that first start in 1937 as secretary to the city editor until the paper was bought by Hearst and combined into the Examiner in the early '60s, but were you doing other writing during that time? Or since?

Leary: I did several pieces for the Saturday Evening Post while I was on the News--including a profile of Mayor Roger Lapham of San Francisco--and I have done some writing since for the Atlantic, the Nation, the New Republic, Commonweal, National Catholic Reporter, Next. Even Time, at one point. But I have pretty consistently worked with the Economist of London the past ten years or so. And more recently with Pacific News Service.

There was a time when I edited a book on early childhood education. And then I did a book about politics and the media, Phantom Politics. I had written for the California Journal and in 1974 Ed Salzman, Journal editor, and Tom Hoeber, president of the Journal corporation, asked me to lead a study on the inter-relation between candidates and media as they were evident in the 1974 governor's contest. It was funded by the Ford Foundation. We had a great time doing the study, with ten or twelve part-time people on the staff, and the book was the ultimate summary of our findings.

During the recent free-lance years it has been regular contributions to the Economist which kept me in touch with political developments in the state and in the West generally. The three years when I was west coast correspondent for Scripps-Howard Newspapers helped me through the immediate period after the News ended. But I have discovered that the world perspective of the Economist

Leary: allowed editors to be more interested in substantial news from the west coast than the perspective of Scripps-Howard wire editors, who were located in Washington and saw the world totally in a Washington frame. Besides, the battle for space in small, locally focused Scripps-Howard papers was fierce. So I have very much enjoyed working for the Economist editors.

Then came the satisfying work, too, with PNS.

Nathan: What is Pacific News Service?

Leary: PNS developed during the Vietnam War as an outlet for a number of Asian scholars who wanted to express themselves about developments in the Asian theater without any link to government agencies and to be free of the existing preconceptions of most news agencies. At any rate, after the war, as I understand it, it wanted to keep a news focus on the Asian frontiers for U.S. interests, though that is not a dominant idea any longer. It is there but not an exclusive interest.

The founding members included Sandy Close and her husband, Franz Schurmann, a University of California professor of sociology. They established a non-profit foundation, Bay Area Institute, to undertake lines of research with various scholars particularly attuned to changes in the world, economic changes, social, political. The aim, as I get it, was to create a link between the perceptions, studies, and observations of the scholars who perceived and studied change, and the general public. Although Sandy Close, who is editor of PNS, has put it differently. She wants to put some of the journalist's awareness of the real world into the work of scholars. She talks about it as "thinking journalism" and says she is as concerned to make scholars see their work realistically in terms of existing conditions and tell about it in those terms as she is in informing the public. Though, of course, the latter relationship is highly important. Anyway, they had the idea for this research center to concern itself with change, and in 1970 founded Pacific News Service as a source for this specialized reporting on change in the U.S. and abroad.

One of their editors has described the PNS orientation as "liberal or left-liberal" but not primarily ideological; more concerned with the interests of the powerless, rather than the powerful. This seems to be true, as I observe their output, but they also pick up some interest arising from conservative circles these days, or from Libertarians, even. They do focus on trends and on ideas, not on breaking news, or if their coverage is tied to breaking news it is as an informed backgrounder or analysis.



Mary Ellen Leary, 1981

Photo by Saxon Donnelly

Leary: A resource, then, are the academicians who have become known to the Bay Area Institute, and they can call on specialists in foreign affairs or history or diplomacy or in domestic fields such as urban problems, immigration, housing, welfare, to do pertinent stories. It uses reporters, too. Obviously, it has a staff of editors to write--or re-write--and it turns to all these free-lancers for a good deal of its output. It began sending copy out in weekly packets to subscriber papers but then expanded to a daily mail service and I believe it is now able to provide some service via wire transmission. In other words, it is young and growing, and although it pays miserably it has been fun to be part of it, because it has approached news with a seriousness and an interest in ideas I have liked.

They had also a contract or an agreement, a fund, to do a special study last year on cities and city problems, and that developed some papers. What the real outcome of that cities project is, I don't know, but it has made them particularly sensitive to problems of the urban area, because they had a number of assigned writers on problems.

Nathan: Is your specialty--what?--California politics?

Leary: Well, California politics to a great extent, and it's sort of gotten into energy a little bit. I've done two or three things for them on energy. They want me to do some things on cities' problems, particularly on Oakland, which I'd like to do but I haven't gotten around to doing. And they'd like me to go down to Tijuana and take a look at what industry is doing in the Mexican area--the immense growth of industry right around the Tijuana area--but I haven't found the time to do that. That's going to take quite a lot of work, and I haven't gotten myself clear to do it, but it would be fun. It would be interesting. Sometimes I suggest and sometimes they suggest stories. Like all editors, I find they are more interested in the ones they suggest. And I am more interested in the ones I suggest! So, it works out.

The Fate of Parties

Leary: I did one for them on what I saw as a possible increase of some party interest. I mean, it almost goes too far to even state that in California: a revival of concern about party structure. But I was looking at where I did feel there was some real lively activity in individual assembly races especially during November,

Leary: and in some of the flap around McCarthy after his open outburst that Jerry Brown "is not interested in issues," and his effort to reestablish party solidarity around traditional Democratic positions.

It got a lot of play in California especially, that story. It was kind of interesting because I think people are so concerned about what's happening to party. I wasn't able to prove that anything is really happening to party, except that there's a hope in a few people's hearts that by groping for some stable positions to stand on, that part of the party which is not just trailing after Jerry might find a way of coming together around McCarthy, which seems to me possible.

It's awfully flexible and muddled right now because no matter how much antipathy Jerry arouses, and he does, among Democrats, with all the Republicans cheering him on in his really conservative stance on fiscal policy, there is a lot of feeling, especially among the assemblymen, that many very serious state problems, which have been traditionally Democratic-supported and traditional Democratic points of concern, are being neglected right now. You know this as much as I do. But it is a possibility, it seems to me, that around this impatience with Brown over his not paying attention to these issues there might be some consolidation among people who say, "Let's make issues important instead of personality."

I feel really strongly that our whole evolution of political leadership in this personalized road that we're following now is destructive as can be, and that unless we can get back to some sort of party structure, some kind of organization where people belong and have a feeling of loyalty, we're in for some rough times. I don't see how you steer a boat successfully unless you have some kind of party structure that means something. That's not new either, but--

Nathan: Well, it's important, and also how you bring together the single-issue advocates.

Leary: Oh, yes.

Nathan: The zealots?

Leary: Yes. That development now, I think, continues to be divisive and continues to be terribly hurtful, the people who judge only on one issue.

I think myself that Jerry is trying to use the single issue of not even fiscal responsibility, but of balanced budgets, because that has a great appeal and because it translates out to people as though it's going to benefit them.

Nathan: Without any discussion of trade-offs or consequences?

Leary: Of course, yes.

Nathan: This is going to lead us a little later, I hope, into a discussion of the '50s when party coalescence began to be more apparent.

Leary: Fine, yes.

Objective Writing

Nathan: There's an interesting connection there. But before we leave this, I wanted to ask you about this article on Jerry Brown that you wrote for Pacific News Service. In reading it, if I had not known you or ever talked to you, I would not have known whether you were for or against Jerry Brown strongly or tepidly. It was a classic demonstration to me of what I think of as real journalistic distance, which is very hard to find these days, and I wondered how you managed that.

Leary: Well, you know, my family and close friends are so accustomed to my being extremely critical of Jerry for his failure to deal with the everyday problems of government, and to be a strong leader, that I have to be very careful not to let this personal disappointment in him show when I write. While I feel he's too opportunistic, there are some things about Brown that I can see to praise. In spite of the stories that are floating around about campaign contributions and so forth, I think he is unusually honest, and I think he's a man of great personal integrity, except that that word gets used then about his commitment to policies, and I'm not sure that it fits there; I mean he is financially totally honest and that's not trifling in politics. But he's lacking, I think, in either long-range goals and principles, or is deliberately opportunistic to move ahead in order to feel if he can get into a higher office, he can do more good and that's the ultimate; all things are good for that reason.

But I say this--generally conversational criticism of him is so common with me that I was terribly amused--I had to make a talk at Consumnes College at a political science course that a friend of mine was involved in earlier this week. When I got to the question period, one of the students said, "It's clear that you like Jerry Brown very much. And so are there any criticisms of him that are valid?" which really made me laugh, and I tried to get myself squared away. I was talking about him as a politician and campaigner at that point and talking about the campaign process.

Leary: I try hard to stay objective. It makes some kinds of writing difficult for me. I have just recently begun trying to write a little bit more personalized, a little bit more of myself into things. I find it difficult to do. I have a lot of legal genes in me, I guess. My father was a law professor, and I have always been in a home where law was a paramount interest, and I think I just absorbed the idea that one looks at facts as objectively as possible, making a judgment. How I came by it--I came by it from having it hammered in a lot, I guess, because when I started out, in the era when college people were just getting into city rooms, my first city editors--well, two or three of them had not gone to college and made jokes about the fact of "Oh, you Stanford types coming in."

Stanford University School of Journalism had an unusual relationship with the San Francisco News. The associate editor, Paul Edwards, was on the board of trustees at Stanford and ultimately became chairman of it through the time when they decided they had to do something about money, and they first built the shopping area and used their property in this fashion. Paul Edwards was in many ways really a great influence on me. But he was on the paper long before I came on, and he had worked with people at Stanford to open the door for a kind of intern training for Stanford journalism students, so that it was traditional for journalism students--a sort of selected number of the class--maybe ten or a dozen--to spend the final semester of their senior year working along with reporters on the News and getting city room experience and beat experience.

Nathan: Did this happen to you?

Leary: No, because I was not a journalism student. I was a straight English grad when I was down there, but I think the News' receptive attitude towards Stanford students likely helped me, though I didn't realize it at the time. I came in, very timid, desperate for a job in that Depression time of 1937, and what helped further was that George West, a very bright, thoughtful person, was editorial writer--but he was also from Sioux City, and had known my mother; and so by getting in to see him I got introduced to the city editor, just as they were looking for someone to be secretary to the city desk.

But all the time then while I was waiting to become a reporter and was only secretary to the city editor and so forth, I saw successive waves of these kids come in. They would be assigned to different beats and would be around. It was one of the early efforts--this is way back; this is before World War II.

Nathan: In the '30s, wasn't it? In the late '30s?

Leary: Yes. I went to work in '37. So, '37, '38, '39--up until wartime. Of course, it was dropped during the war because everything was so hectic, and there were no young people around anyway.

But at that time, that sort of broke through into part of the San Francisco newspaper field anyway--I think maybe more than the Examiner, for instance, and more than the Call-Bulletin--an avenue for people coming out of Stanford, and there was quite a clique of Stanford graduates there with a lot of self-pride. I didn't know it at the time that I arrived, but looking back now I recognize that this represented a new era in journalism, the time when it was accepted that you came in through journalism school.

So, where was I?

Nathan: Telling me how you somehow have managed to avoid being over-personal, especially in political writing.

Leary: The strong emphasis and training that I got then on the job and saw people getting was that you must have the other side of the story. It was a time of great labor turmoil in San Francisco, as you remember--Harry Bridges and all that. And I can remember the absolutely imperative rule that you mustn't carry a statement by the employers, who were always on hand with their statements, without trying to get the union side of it. Partly this was because the News was more than the other three papers a labor-oriented paper, but because there was a really conscientious effort to give a balanced report.

It was very hard in those days to get labor people to talk to the press. First of all, they were not accustomed to it. They didn't see the reason for it. To hell with us; they were busy with something else. And it meant that an awful lot of effort went into trying to rope them into it. I remember many times having to work on just trying to find somebody and run them down. But other stories of other types of things too we worked on, trying to give a balanced statement.

I came to thinking in journalism that maybe that was wrong; maybe you should have, you know, a little bit more--instead of just carefully balancing how many words you said on one side and how many words on the other side. It would be unfair, actually, to suggest that's what they were doing, because the News had some awfully good newspaper people in it, and I learned from all of them, because I was a kid and eager. The News had the extraordinary city room situation, which almost no other paper in the country had, of having two women; it was clear that I was going to have to wait until there was an opportunity for one woman. I'd have to outwait both of those.

Nathan: Really? What were their names?

Leary: One was Betty Ballantine, who was the daughter of a law professor at Berkeley. The second woman, a bright, quick, fluttery but tenacious girl--I'd guess both were in their mid-twenties--was Anna Sommers, who ultimately married Ernest Lenn, a News reporter.

Nathan: So the city room would only accommodate two women?

Leary: Well, basically only one. It was extraordinary to have two. Betty was a very, very good reporter and a very fast reporter. She was then married to George Wilson, who ultimately headed the drive to support Harry Bridges and then became an official in one union, maybe the ILWU, but I'm not sure. Don Wiley, who was chief rewrite on the paper, was a widely respected reporter in San Francisco, and one of those who taught me, by example. Often Betty handled the writing inside, as reporters phoned in their stories. She was just very quick and very able and could be handling two or three stories at a time. Anna was a cute little vivacious energetic person who was the kind who was always being sent out on stories and phoning them in all excited.

When I came in, as I mentioned, I was secretary to the city editor, and I waited that out three years. In one of the interesting interludes one summer, the daughter of a friend of Roy Howard's, he being editor of all Scripps-Howard papers, came along and was assigned for a summer experience to work on the News. Her name is now Katherine Graham. We were about, I guess, the same age. [pauses to think] She may be three or four years younger. She came in and, of course, I had no idea for sure that this was just a summertime thing, and I thought, "There goes my chance. She moved in ahead of me." But, oh, we became friends, and it was all right. But those things happen.

Finally Anna Sommers married. There was a shuffle around. Helen Civelli had been around waiting to be on the city side.

Nathan: She was on the women's side, was she?

Leary: Yes. And then ultimately was moved back to the women's side. When Helen was moved back, then I was moved onto the city side and given my chance.

Nathan: I see. Well, from what you've described, I gather that the direction really came from the editors, that there was a certain approach that was appropriate.

Leary: Yes. Looking back now, I feel editorial direction over reporters in that period was more demanding, more explicit than occurs today. You'd be given stories back to rewrite, if they didn't suit. There was a definite effort to train new reporters, or I felt it anyway.

Nathan: Has that changed now, do you think?

Leary: I think there is much more personalized journalism. Yes, I think it's changed a great deal. I think the objective of getting balance in a story is still there. Politically, I see it in campaign times carried to a really ludicrous point when they measure the length of the stories, and use them under twin headlines or exactly identical headlines and this kind of thing, and try to make the lead of each story have exactly the same type of thing in it. So, I think it nullifies any news value and is an insidious development in the latter part of a campaign.

Journalism generally now is so much more a desperate effort to combine entertainment with news value that I think some of the writing emphasizes personal viewpoint more than the kind of objectivity that I was trained at. I'm not going to say--I don't know which is better. I felt and still feel rather strongly that a story, unless it sets out to give a personal point of view, should be carefully balanced. That's interesting, though, that you saw this Jerry Brown article as notably objective.

Nathan: An example of a very neat way of doing it. I read it with special interest, as you can imagine.

Leary: And you wouldn't have known. That's good!

Nathan: I wouldn't have.

Learning on the Job: the Woman's Angle

Leary: I think one learns pretty much on the job in a newspaper what to do, and learns by getting something thrown back at you and [being told], "You haven't got So-and-So's point of view. You haven't explained this," which happened a lot. They were always pleased and delighted if you could bring in some little tiny unusual nuance.

I remember one time being sent to interview a British ambassador who was just coming through from the Far East. I'm not sure exactly where he was an ambassador to or from, except that he was very British--Lord Somebody. I went to see him at the Palace [Hotel] and rang him from the lobby and went up. He received me in his dressing gown, which was an extremely proper looking, lovely, silk, black-striped thing, with sort of two or three kinds of weaves in it, but just elegant and gentlemanly looking. He crossed his legs--he had black shoes on, black socks on--and I

Leary: saw that he was wearing black and white garters, and it was all so proper as attire for an ambassador even in the privacy of his room, it struck me as very funny. So, one of the first real compliments I got was when I was able to work his garters into the lead of the story! I discovered that you could tell about the interview, but that you had to say something that caught people's attention. So, they, you know, always liked a little bit of something unusual.

I certainly was taught by some very good newspapermen. I was frequently chastised for getting too featureish and not sticking hard enough with facts, which I've appreciated, those hard knocks.

Nathan: Yes. What sorts of things were you sent to do? You had one story about interviewing a lady wrestler, and I wondered how typical that might have been.

Leary: It was pretty typical in that they were constantly sending the woman reporter out for the woman's angle on this or that. And if you had an odd thing happen about women--women were not as inventive or in as many parts of the scene in those days, of course, but if you did have a woman doing an unusual job, why, out I would go to interview her about how she liked it, how she got it, what she thought of it.

And the lady wrestler, I do remember! Where she came from, I don't know. It was just mostly a case of getting a picture and doing some kind of a funny story.

Oh, goodness. We tried to break the abortion rings in San Francisco. I had seven abortion appointments in one week.

Nathan: Purporting to be a patient?

Leary: Yes. Purporting to be apprehensive lest I was pregnant, and pretty befuddled about exactly what date, how far along I was, and also to see what kinds of arrangements they made with you. They never sent me alone; they would send a man reporter with me pretending to be my husband so that it would be that kind of a situation. We went down to the dime store and bought me a wedding ring, which I kept for such assignments.

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Nathan: Thinking again about the sorts of stories that you were assigned, do you recall how you got into political reporting?

Leary: Oh, sure! The real emphasis in the use of a woman on the city side was for things which it was assumed that a woman would most naturally fall into, would relate to. And in the late '30s, this meant a great deal of stories about social welfare problems, and I loved doing them. I was hungry to know about the city and

Leary: excited at getting out. Although frequently sent off to interview a woman who'd been hurt badly in an accident, or been shot at, or been in some horrible mess, I found myself pressing for stories about welfare and getting indignant about some of the problems in welfare and the way they were handled. I had three or four assignments when I pretended to be on welfare.

Nathan: So, this would be like the parallel in the abortion ring?

Leary: Yes, there was in those days a good deal of journalism in which you went to prison to find out what the prisons were like, and you did a facsimile of the thing. In fact, one time somebody opened a dating bureau in San Francisco, and we tried to get one of the reporters lined up with the dates, but they had already made a compact with the Chronicle. So, to beat the Chronicle and to do it, we took their rules, and one of the reporters and I went out together on overtime, the very first time I ever worked overtime [chuckles], went to dinner at the St. Francis, went to the theater, and all that kind of thing, and then wrote a story about what it is like, you know, and how you hand the envelope over at the end of the evening to the gentleman, full of the money that pays him, and so forth. So, again, a facsimile, you see, of something, of what it was like. Yes, that was really funny.

Developing the Welfare Beat

Leary: But I remember that I got indignant about how many places people were referred to on welfare and did a map of the city one time, or of the streets downtown, showing how far you had to walk from one place to another, to another, to get squared away before you ever were going to get a check of any kind, to get clearances. This was in the early days of--what?--SRA and so forth, the State Relief Administration and the beginning of federal programs. There were even Hoovervilles around, you know, and people were pretty desperate in those early years about how to cope with the poverty that they had, before we had really systematized.

One time I spent the whole day as a single woman without any money and without employment, to see what happened to a single woman arriving in town. It was kind of amusing because I, not knowing quite what to wear for such an event, looked through the closet and decided that the worst looking outfit that I had was my old school uniform from my Catholic private college, which was supposedly very elegant. But, of course, by that time the uniform was pretty sad, and by the time you were a senior it was a sad thing anyway. And I had dragged this around. It was a jumper style thing.

Leary: So, I wore that, and for security pinned a couple of dollars inside to my underwear so that I would not be absolutely desperate if I got lost somewhere. But I discovered that I never could get in any place to get at the extra two dollars in order to get a bus. [laughter] After I'd used what cash I had for streetcars, I had to walk because I couldn't find a bathroom I wanted to go into; and the ones I wanted to go into, I looked so deliberately awful that I didn't dare go in to get it.

I went at that time through all the routine of being passed from one agency to another, always referring a person on to somebody else, trying to illustrate the chaotic duplication of effort and failure to systematize approach to the many problems of welfare. I didn't realize then how new these problems were to society and how unplanned the approach, but I knew the frustration of people alone and hungry and trying to find a place to live, and I was trying to find out who helps such a person finally. I did get food--Travelers Aid. And I got promise of a bed at a hospital. But it all made for quite a series of interesting articles. That's the kind of thing that a woman did.

I found I liked going beyond the feature story, to pursue more deeply questions of public policy: "What is the agency doing? and Who's responsible? and What's policy?" I got acquainted with many of the federal bureau people, and some of them were very fine people. There were lots of really very sensitive people there, groping with problems that were just too big to cope with. I found that I could get stories from them and, to my astonishment, that they would say something about what they were going to do.

Secrecy and Public Meetings

Leary: So, I began doing stories about welfare in a kind of a beat fashion and then got an assignment covering the school board. That was fun because the News was riding the heck out of the school board over having secret meetings at that time.

Nathan: This was before the [Ralph] Brown Act?

Leary: Oh, long before the Brown Act. Oh, yes. I remember one time, in fact, one of the local commissions that had to do with juvenile justice met regularly by the City Charter every third Thursday or something like that. But they met for lunch at Solari's, up in one of those little curtained rooms up above, Solari's on Geary near the St. Francis Hotel.

Leary: And I found out where they were. (Juvenile justice was an issue that we got into heavily too, a little bit after the war got going, not as early as the welfare stuff.) But I went up and went into the little room where they were meeting and urged that they not consider my presence an impediment, to go ahead and have lunch. I wouldn't have any lunch; I was just going to sit there and report. They were outraged and, of course, wound up with throwing me out.

Nathan: They treated it like a social situation instead of a working session?

Leary: Yes, well, it was private. The idea of a newspaper reporter attending a city meeting, when they were carrying out their work--it was convenient for them to meet at lunch; they saw no reason why they shouldn't meet at lunch. They were talking about problems about juvenile justice, and they certainly thought that nobody else had any right to be there unless invited to offer a point of view or something. Whether minutes were kept--there may have been minutes kept, somebody there to do some general capsuling of what they did. But this was an official city meeting.

Well, we had a great time with that in the paper. And ultimately--it took quite a long time--ultimately they moved their official meetings back to a public agency, a public room, and admitted the press and so forth.

We were going through the same thing with the school board. The school board met in public, but they met and in a very routine fashion went down through an agenda by numbers. [imitating procedure of school board:] "On Item 12, you all know what this item is. Do I hear a motion?" "I move--" And if you didn't have the thing in front of you to know what the issue was--

Nathan: There was no discussion then?

Leary: No, there was no discussion. Occasionally there would be a discussion of, "I want it registered, I want it known that my view on this is such and such."

But they met by custom for about an hour to two hours prior to their official meeting. And they always said, "If any reporters want to come in, recognizing that this is not a public meeting and that it's not to be reported on, you're welcome. You can come in and know what we're doing, but you can't report on it."

And the News--prior to my getting this assignment, others had worked on this--used to carry a little box at the lead of the story saying what time each of the members arrived, and they went

Leary: into room number so-and-so, and what time they left that room and went into the public hearing room. That would be run in agate at the top of the story, making it perfectly clear how long they'd been in their secret session. And we would editorialize about it and so forth. Ultimately, of course, the system got broken.

It's not so terribly, terribly abandoned, though, you know. The State Public Utilities Commission only five years ago threw a reporter out and actually finally called the police to arrest him because he wouldn't go. It was a Reagan commission, and an Examiner reporter.

Nathan: And they threw him out?

Leary: They tried to get him to leave, and he wouldn't leave, so they had him arrested. But next day they calmed down and wiser heads cooled it all. But they adopted a formal policy of open committee meetings thereafter.

It's a period of much stronger journalistic independence now than it was thirty years ago. The meeting that he was attending, which they had always held in secret, was the meeting when they took a final vote on a critical issue. It did not have to do with hearings, their gathering of testimony, but their final vote. They had indignantly said that this kind of a session required them to talk more honestly and openly than they could in a public session.

That brought a great many demonstrations. This was five years ago and at a time when the consumer movement and the environmentalists were pretty active. The consumer movement had turned to demanding Lifeline rates for the elderly. At the end of the '60s and beginning of the '70s many consumer groups and environmentalists were critical of utility operations and one of the early issues around which they converged was the impact on the elderly of rising utility rates. Many young people out of the protest movement on various campuses took this up as a cause. It got a lot of media attention, and many people in 1974 running for governor--I think, for instance, of Bill Roth, George Moscone, Bob Moretti--all walked in picket lines before the PUC in the aftermath of this throwing the reporter out and that sort of thing.

Now, I only mention that because, you know, we're looking at thirty years ago, how things were conducted. But even today the tendency to feel that it's perfectly proper for us to meet on the public's business in private can still be sustained, but that's now changed. From the meeting [during] which they called the police to eject that reporter--from that meeting on, they've never had any private meetings.

Nathan: No. [tape off briefly for telephone interruption]

Were you involved with Michael Harris in the preparation that the press did before the Brown Act was enacted?

Leary: No, I was not. I know all the flap about--well, I don't know all the flap. I just remember how much there was about passing the Brown Act. What was the incident then which Mike Harris--? [pauses to think] That was largely legislative, of course. Ralph Brown was the author.

Nathan: It applied only to local government. It did not apply at the state level.

Leary: It did not apply to the legislature.

Nathan: No, it had nothing to do with the state, and I think that's perhaps why the State Public Utilities Commission could still make a last stand.

Leary: They probably--yes.

Nathan: And then there was the question of whether a committee, let's say, of the city council, or a committee of the board of supervisors could meet secretly.

Leary: Might meet, yes. And what constituted a committee. I do remember that, yes.

Nathan: Right. And what a majority of the board was, and a majority of the committee. It's interesting how long these reforms take.

Leary: It is, yes. And then they become taken for granted, and nobody realizes that there was a big issue at one time.

Nathan: Yes, or there is a great strawman set up, saying, "Well, of course, this isn't going to solve all problems."

Leary: Yes.

Nathan: One doesn't contend that it will!

Leary: No. They are such tiny little steps, but they're important steps.

Nathan: They are. Well, I was interested in what seemed to me your action in actually developing a social welfare beat for yourself.

Leary: I think probably all reporters who love reporting get into that kind of thing, because one story inevitably leads you to seeing the possibility of another. You make a contact, and the person says something that you can't use in the story you're working on, but you remember it and go back and want to develop a story. So, it's very easy to become kind of a specialist.

Federal Agencies and Public Housing

Nathan: I was curious about how you then moved from being knowledgeable locally into the state level.

Leary: Well, two things happened. First, the war. And the first thing that happened, really, a bit ahead of actual Pearl Harbor date, was the mushrooming of federal agencies around California generally but, of course, all over the country. There was a particular nucleus of them; San Francisco was a logical place for regional offices to be established.

Well, public housing--let me go back--was another program that came along. If you remember, FDR [Franklin Delano Roosevelt] started the program of public housing, and it came along actually before I was even a reporter. I talked the city editor into letting me go out and look at different areas where public housing was clearly needed or might logically be placed, and explore what San Franciscans thought about the need, and what potential neighbors thought about having them located nearby. I would explore this on my own time on weekends and then write it, so I was writing stories before I was a reporter, while I was still a secretary. I would look at the areas that were being proposed as proper places for public housing, and talk to neighbors, and write stories about what it would be like.

I did a lot about public housing, and that got me into a number of federal agencies, meeting federal people who were on it, and it was interesting because I then did become kind of a specialist on housing. And when the programs began--that was when it was just being talked about in Washington, and we were hypothesizing, "What will it mean to the community?" They started to build and Washington would send back dinging all of the proposals on sites, saying, "You can't possibly build housing on a hill as steep as that. Nobody would permit it."

Nathan: How funny! It's true!

Leary: Yes. They also were outraged at the smallness of the lots that they were dealing with here and the price of land in San Francisco. They finally had to get through some exemptions to the limitation on the price of land for public housing because San Francisco was expensive.

I have to mention that the period when I was covering housing for the News led me to meet some of the most wonderful women of that era--such as Alice Griffiths, who is memorialized, I hope, in some other oral history reports. She was a member of the first San Francisco Housing Authority--a champion of decent housing for the poor since days of the earthquake. It also led me to meet Catherine Bauer, one of the outstanding housing planners of the '40s and '50s.

But through these programs, I had gotten into sort of dealing with the bureaucratic world out there that was having more say. When war agencies began to be set up, and the major news on the home front was how much butter you're going to get and how many gallons of gas you're going to get, that then was something that I developed as a beat. I worked consistently and hard, and I had some stories out of it because of the people that I knew and the way I was working with some federal agencies on other stories, housing and so forth.

It was easy to call somebody in the housing office and say, "Look, I hear they're just starting a manpower control," whatever manpower control was going to be--a big employment effort to try to find women and to try to find older people to go into some of the factories as the younger people were gone. "Who do I talk to on that? And what are they doing?" I moved into it kind of logically from where I'd been before. So, the city desk said, "That's your beat. You just go out there." That I was delighted with, because it was really accepted that I could specialize.

Price controls were then being imposed. And I met many people who became longtime friends of mine who were University of California law professors and were on loan--or now are federal judges and so forth--were doing their first stint, at running the OPA.

Nathan: Do you remember any of the names?

Leary: That's how I first met Barbara Armstrong of U.C.'s Boalt Hall, one of the first--and most illustrious--women law professors in the country. And Richard Jennings, also of Boalt Hall law school. And someone who impressed me very much then was Ben Duniway, who became regional head of OPA (Office of Price Administration) and is now a senior judge of the Ninth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

Leary: This war agency beat, which I deliberately tried then to develop-- any branch of government that was imposing rules on what our civilian life was going to be was the news, the only news that mattered, after the news of the battles. I just had a ball, because I was usually writing the banner line story every day because that's where the news was, and it was fun.

Political Editor at the News

Leary: Brook Clyde had been political editor. Brook Clyde now is in San Francisco, retired; but, no, he has a public relations office still. He had left for the war, and I think he went into the-- what is it?--OWI?

Nathan: The Office of War Information?

Leary: The Office of War Information, as a lot of the newspaper people did. The city editor went, and the staff was beginning to go. When Frank Clarvoe was back at an editors' meeting, I came in from a story, and when I called in the city editor said, "By the way, I want to talk to you when you get in." And, of course, that always makes you think, "Oh, what did I do now?" He said, "Clarvoe phoned, and he wants you to be political editor," just like that.

So, my hypothesis is that somebody asked him, "Who's writing politics for your paper now that everybody's gone to war and you don't have any young men left and so forth?" and that he went out to the phone and called the city desk and then came back and said, "Mary Ellen is." That was an unusual thing, because we already had a woman writing politics, and that was Ruth Finney* in Washington.

Nathan: Oh, yes. She was the Washington bureau for the News?

Leary: She was directly the Washington correspondent, and she covered also for the Denver Rocky Mountain News, the Albuquerque Tribune, and the San Francisco News. Our paper was by far the largest in

*Ruth Finney's papers, her letters and a large quantity of her news reports, are being housed at U.C. Davis library (Shields Library).

Leary: circulation at that time and we made the greatest call on her time. Besides, she was a Californian and was very interested in California news. She took care of the interests of those three papers through the Scripps-Howard Bureau, with her headquarters at the Scripps-Howard News Bureau in Washington. From that, then, developed also a once-a-week column, which I think through part of the war became a daily column, but generally a once-a-week column, about political tipster type things, which was excellent and very highly respected.

So, the News then became a paper with two women covering politics for it, one in Washington and one in Sacramento or thereabouts.

Nathan: So, you were in Sacramento?

Leary: Well, I only went to Sacramento to do the session.

Nathan: This would be during the late '40s?

Leary: Yes. Forty-five was my first session. In fact, '45 was--[pauses to think] Yes. I'm trying to think of when did Dewey run. Yes, I was assigned, I guess, in '44, because I covered Dewey's coming into town. Dewey ran in '48, really, but he was in and out as a likely Republican choice in the 1944 campaign, and covering his visits and Willkie's represented my first go at presidential news.

Nathan: Let's see. You're in '44 now.

Leary: And we're remembering that Roosevelt, whom I saw come into California two or three times, but don't remember particularly his campaigning, only came for sort of big events.

But I remember covering several meetings and public appearances that Wendell Willkie made here. Roy Howard was in town and was having a hard time apparently trying to decide whether to take Willkie seriously, and I remember his asking me my views of him, which were, of course, far too immature to be any help.

The first thing I ever undertook politically when I'd got this--"All right, you're assigned." I asked, "What do I do?" I read the paper to see if I could find out anybody that was in town I ought to be paying attention to and discovered that United States Senator Fred Houser was in town. Houser the Good, as we used to call him to distinguish him from Fred Howser. Howser became attorney general, and was a figure in Republican political circles in those days; his associates before and after he was attorney general--some of whom went to prison--really made him a very different political animal from the U.S. Senator. Well, I discovered

Leary: Senator Houser was in town. I called and asked to see him, and he made an appointment for me to come to breakfast the next day. At that point I discovered an important thing about covering politics, and that is that you lose your weekends totally, because the next day was Saturday.

So, I went down to have breakfast with him, and he talked with me just as he would with any other political reporter, the entire conversation weighing how he had done in the primary, county to county, around the state, which today I would find fascinating but at that point seemed to me the most extraordinary exercise in mathematics that I was going to be exposed to. If he had picked up 12 percent of the Democratic vote in Colusa--

Nathan: And we still had cross-filing, didn't we, then?

Leary: Yes, yes. What he thought he could do--all he had to do was to get out 65 percent of the Republican vote, and he was sure that he'd be able to swing it with that, because he thought he could make that 12 percent. And in Kern County, this. And, you know, Los Angeles. I had never looked at any of the math of elections before, and I was absolutely stunned by this. I have no idea what I wrote as a story about our interview, but it was a good lesson to me, because from that point on I became very interested in what the percentages were and how they did, and I found that that's how you watch what's going on.

Nathan: Yes. How you get these insights is so interesting.

Leary: Sure. You have to know how to measure exactly how the strength is county by county and district by district, and Democrats or Republicans, whether you can hold the rival party or not. In those cross-filing days that was terribly important.

Around in that time was when I met in Los Angeles the man who was--I want to say the name "Ford," but that was a supervisor in Los Angeles County--the man who really worked hardest at trying to end cross-filing and get partisanship back again.

Nathan: It wasn't John Anson Ford then? No.

Leary: No. That's the name that was coming to me, and I don't mean John Anson Ford; it was John B. Elliott. He was a man of some wealth, and he may have been in oil, oddly enough, but he was a very dedicated Democrat who was convinced that the party couldn't be built into any kind of strength until they got rid of cross-filing, and worked, and I think financially supported a lot of the early drive. He worked with it consistently for a long time until they finally got it achieved, got it on the ballot.

Leary: And that, of course, ultimately made way for many Democrats of this kind who surfaced in the Olson time. I mean, they got a chance to air themselves and begin to feel a little strength through the Olson administration. Of course, the Elliott-supported reform came long after the Olson administration and affected party cohesiveness most advantageously for Pat Brown. But party consciousness was quickened in California in the Depression and in the FDR era, from a national thrust, and made Olson's election possible. But the party interest afterwards did not die out and in the '40s there were a lot of people who had a serious desire to see the party strong and amount to something. I would run into them and find it fascinating that ultimately that worked.

Harriet, you asked how I got into politics. It was through expanding my contacts with people in government and learning how to develop stories about government. I have no idea why at that time government stories seemed interesting to me, but they did, and going to government sources, and pinning them down. I could get stories that were fun.

Documents and Interviews

Nathan: It may have had something to do with the sort of research that you did. Just going through some of your cartons that are in The Bancroft Library showed how extensive your research was. You gathered documents, didn't you?

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Leary: Yes. But in reporting, the essence of what is news usually comes from interviews, what someone says that is interesting or revealing or just a telling comment. As I was trained, we had to make clear our source or document within the story itself, the justification for the point we made. If you wanted to go beyond the surface reporting of what occurred, you had to figure out some evidence that would stand up, in the story itself. We were schooled to be careful not to libel someone--which meant, basically, not to get the newspaper into a lawsuit. But to reveal what we could, so we were always looking for someone to quote. In our reporting of the '40s and '50s and '60s, we never wrote stories with quite the license that, for instance, the Watergate stories exercised.

Let me illustrate. Governor Warren tried to enact health insurance as a state program, you know. There were a lot of fascinating aspects to that. He thought that some doctors would support him in it, but it turned out they didn't. When the

Leary: legislation was in committee hearing in Sacramento, it was perfectly clear the medical society was opposed--they said so openly and were quoted. But a lot of other interests joined with them, but not openly. The night the measure got its final hearing and was killed for sure, I found the lobbyist for the medical society and asked him if they had managed to stop the governor all alone--if they were that strong. And he said, "Oh, no. The insurance lobby, and the manufacturers..." and he ticked off about four or five other business groups. The reason I'd asked it was because it was obvious the whole business-industry lobby had ganged up together, but until someone could be quoted on it, I didn't feel I could report it as fact.

I can remember a number of times when I had really good stories--oh, I can remember some really good stories!--and partly did not feel the editors would let me get away with writing about it if I did not reveal my source in the story itself. In those days the assumption was that the reader must be able to give it credence not on the veracity of the reporter, but on the evidence presented to him. And this led one to want documents, yes, or to want--even if you only pulled a couple of quotes out of it--something that was solid.

What I did--on another occasion--was present a man alleged to have received much unknown pay from private clients with a set of written questions asking if he had So-and-So as clients and what he did for them. His response was to go to the editor--who was ill in the hospital. I never got answers to those questions. If the paper hadn't been in turmoil, with an editor who didn't know the community, we might have figured a way to get it told. Today, I think, a reporter would have carried it without disclosing how he knew.

But there were times, Harriet, when there were absolutely marvelous stories that I didn't know how to expose. I had somebody hand me a paper carrying a purported report from the state tax returns of a very eminent political figure, showing his fees from clients; almost all of them individually exceeded his annual pay. I had a really rough time trying to figure how to get that used--ultimately I never did. I never did. I could not and would not have told, because a public official gave me that report. He thought the man should be exposed. But my editors were not of a mind at that time--it was a time when the News was somewhat in a tailspin and editors came and went. They were not of a mind to stick their necks out far enough to accuse somebody of that kind of thing. If they'd been there for a long time and knew the community, they would have, I think.

Leary: But I relish the kinds of journalism now, where people can sit down and say, "I know such and such," or, "I have this on good authority." I used to, and the men I worked with urged me to, follow the code of not accepting information off-the-record; if people said, "I will tell you about it for background," to not accept it.

I find now the practice of accepting news without revealing the source is growing and growing, and what I usually do is to say, "All right. I'll accept it, not for attribution to you, but identifying the type of person it's from. And when we're through, if there's something I want to quote from you, I will come back and ask you if I may use this particular sentence."

An amazing number of people will start out telling you they'll only tell you something for non-attribution; you can only have this as a backgrounder. But if you come back and say, "May I quote you on this and this?" they'll say, "Oh, of course," because it will fit into your context of the story you're building and be pertinent. Once they've made this kind of blanket, "Let me speak freely," then you can go back and get them to stand for a few sentences.

But early, when I began covering politics, I tried to make a habit of not accepting anything off-the-record. I was glad I did, because there was a great deal of off-the-record stuff going on in Sacramento, and it made a point. It meant that when I got a story, all the other reporters knew that it was a real story, and it got taken a little bit more seriously, I think. There was beginning to be this kind of lax journalism of what people thought and so forth without pinning it down.

Elected Officials: A Range in Quality

Nathan: Were your sources primarily bureaucrats, or legislators? Could you characterize the people you dealt with mostly?

Leary: Well, starting to cover politics, it's going to be different from covering, for instance, a war agency beat or the school board, because it plunges into that whole thing about elections and who's running against whom.

That was the era of Bill Malone being the Democratic party chairman in San Francisco and the central wheel. He was the powerhouse in San Francisco at that time, the liaison between the state party people; the national party people; and the really curious types who surfaced as legislators in the late '30s, the

Leary: kinds of people who kind of got swept in with Olson. They were ardent Democrats, and they were curious personalities. Those were the days when the [legislator's] salary was \$100 a month, and they were not top-notch professional people by a long shot, on the whole. People like that didn't run.

A few Republicans did; and a few out of the Jewish community who felt very serious about their responsibilities, for instance--well, I'm thinking of Al Wollenberg, and Joe Feigenbaum, who is in the Steinhart firm. Steinhart himself, although not in politics, was one of the staunch supporters of Earl Warren.

Nathan: This was Jesse Steinhart?

Leary: Yes. That segment of the community and occasionally other Republicans of some backing--Ray Williamson was a Republican--I saw the name the other day and wondered if it might not be his son, a judge in town.

Bill Malone once exploded to me that I was always critical, and sometimes openly in the paper critical, of the quality of Democratic legislators. He said, "You just ought to see what it's like to try to get somebody to run, to give their time." At that time the legislature met only every other year. It met in January, had February off, and then would meet March, April, May, and into about June. But he said, "To get somebody to do that for \$100 a month--no way can I do it! They won't come."

So, the result was they had Ed Gaffney, who started life as a Shakespearean actor and whose main purpose was getting his family of eight kids or something through the various convent schools they were going to. And Cliff Berry died in office, just about election time, when his name was on the ballot and it happened Phil Burton was making his first try for office and ran against him, and Berry, though dead, got more votes.

Nathan: Do you remember someone named Bernard Brady?

Leary: Sure. Bernard Brady, yes. I'm thinking of Brady too, who also had a flock of kids.

So, out of the Irish Catholic community you got a certain level of people who found it the logical way for upward mobility, to get into politics. Of course, Tommy Maloney was, well, maybe the crème de la crème of that crowd. Tommy Maloney's roots in politics went back quite a bit further than I'm talking about--they went back into the '20s. But he had been a supporter of Tom Finn, the sheriff of San Francisco who was the political boss of San Francisco

Leary: at that time, and earlier. Finn was so strong Hiram Johnson had been compelled to make deals with him about state patronage on the waterfront, which was then state-owned, but where employment at that time seemed to be largely at Finn's whim. Like some of those early bosses, Finn appears not so much to have been lining his own pockets--I think he died poor--as trying to get jobs for people.

Maloney had been supported by Tom Finn and part of Finn's crowd, and had gone up to the legislature as a senator first, from San Francisco, at a time when, I think, the way the senate apportionment was set, San Francisco had a large number of senators and a very preponderant number of assemblymen.

When we spoke last time, I think I was mentioning the period when San Francisco lost its power to the south and the speakership shifted--which was in '33?

Nathan: Would it have been during reapportionment, or was that in between reapportionment eras?

Leary: It was at the time of a reapportionment, which meant it was around '31.

Nathan: Yes, that would be about right.

Leary: Tommy Maloney, having lost a senate seat then, ultimately ran again for the assembly and got back in there. Maloney was a very, very decent guy, thoroughly devoted to the labor movement. He was an absolute abstinence man. I mean, he never drank, which gave him tremendous advantage, and he took seriously what he was doing. He had an insurance business, and I'm sure that his political life augmented it. But he was able to take his stance as a supporter of labor measures and fight for various labor things, and workmen's compensation particularly, and unemployment insurance improvements, and that sort of thing, at a time when labor was very, very much opposed by the agricultural interests in the state.

I think that though Maloney was not a particularly sophisticated person, his earnestness and his tenure and experience and his complete sobriety gave him so much advantage over everybody else that he was very valuable to the labor movement, and people respected him. So, he never became top-ranking--I'm not even sure whether he was ever a committee chairman (he must have been a committee chairman at some time), nor have I ever been absolutely sure what his relations with Samish were. I think a certain degree of tolerance on both sides maybe was established.

Leary: But Tommy had a basic integrity and was not going to be bought for anything. He was interested in getting his causes represented, and he understood human nature pretty well and what was going on up in the legislature too. He understood what Samish was doing and what Samish's power was, and within those limitations, he was doggedly in there fighting for labor, not winning a lot but in there fighting.

Now, I was mentioning the caliber of people. He almost stood out, except that Al Wollenberg was there, who was a real leader at the time that I first went up to the legislature.

You asked me whom I dealt with. I had been dealing with bureaucrats and dealing with government people, many of whom I very much liked. Rollin Post's father, Langdon Post--

Nathan: Is he the son of Langdon Post?

Leary: Yes.

Nathan: And Miggs is his mother?

Leary: I think not. I have a feeling that that was a second marriage.

And Dick Neustadt. Did you know him?

Nathan: He's just a name to me.

Leary: He's a professor at Harvard. His father was regional head of social welfare or something here, a federal agency. [pauses to think] WPA. Maybe it was WPA, and then it became a larger thing.

Neustadt set up an inter-relationship between all federal agencies and state and local agencies, made an effort to have the bureaucrats talk with each other at least, which I found fascinating. I remember, I was a kid reporter and he was an older man, but it was fascinating to talk with him and learn about government from him.

He had come out from Washington and found this a more attractive place to be in than Washington. All of the ideals of the FDR era on what they were going to do were being expressed by many of these people, in housing, in setting up the water programs, in setting up the welfare programs, and then in the efforts to do something about delinquent youth. We were going to solve that problem completely.

Juvenile Hall and the News Crusade

Nathan: Was this partly CCC, that sort of thing?

Leary: Yes, yes. And then the state getting into--well, for one thing, San Francisco Juvenile Hall, when I was still just a beat reporter, founded what was called the Log Cabin Ranch. Have you heard of it?

Nathan: Yes, I have.

Leary: It is up near Gualala. And they had some extremely idealistic people in juvenile probation. The referee, one of the first women in a judicial type of post, was Mary Kohler, who was a fine, sensitive, intelligent woman. She was a referee for the juvenile court. She had come out of law and been a clerk in one of the judge's offices here, and then got into referee and juvenile court hearings, and did a good deal to work toward having a program that looked beyond warehousing.

I don't know whether you've ever been in what was then the Juvenile Hall in San Francisco. It is one of the most abysmal buildings. It is on Mission Street about two blocks beyond Van Ness where Mission Street begins to curve, and there's a very, very tall building. It must be fourteen stories tall, and narrow, and was cell blocks almost all the way up, and had offices and interview rooms and so forth on the first floors. I don't believe they ever thought to build a classroom into it. It had a horrible cement square outside that was used for exercise. And these kids were locked up in there. It was inhuman.

The drive to get some sort of program to get them out became a great crusade of the News, and we, oh gosh, gathered money and contributions for animals on farms and this and that and the other thing. We did a lot to support that.

Groups and Endorsements

Leary: Again, I'm talking about the kinds of people. I had to then get along with elected people and find out what the elective process was all about and who made that run. That meant getting acquainted with party people and also with some of these funny endorsing groups around town, which were very influential.

Nathan: Were they?

Leary: You wouldn't think they mattered, really, but they were influential; I mean, little tiny committees that never met until election time. I never did do a thorough enough job of finding out how they grew. They grew out of old organizations that were around. Some board of directors would be left over, and they used to recommend who to vote for, and so they'd just keep on recommending who to vote for.

Nathan: Weren't there also groups of civic clubs?

Leary: Yes. There was Central Council of Civic Clubs. And each neighborhood club would send delegates and so forth. The most influential of them was the little handful of people who really also had other hats in relation to the Masonic Cemetery. They were a group of Shriners who kind of were powerful and ultimately backed Elmer Robinson, but were moving around in Republican circles all the time to make their weight felt.

And then there was the Downtown Association, and the Apartment House Association, which had a lot to say, and the Building Owners and Operators (something like that) Association, and, of course, the Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber of Commerce always produced nice, dignified, handsome people who could make such a nice appearance.

Nathan: How about the labor endorsements? Were they valuable in San Francisco?

Leary: Oh, yes, yes. Of course. Oh, yes, indeed. And it was kind of fun because there would be some [pauses to think]--what do I want to say?--errant unions that went their own way and wouldn't follow where they were supposed to.

Nathan: Like the Longshore Unions? Were they--?

Leary: The Longshore Union would be one, always off on what people would say [was] "a Commie kick," you know.

Nathan: Yes.

Leary: And another one, and I'm kind of intrigued by the consistency of this--the cleaners and window washers, the Building Maintenance people. And I saw--I could go and get the clipping in a minute--an announcement. When Jerry [Brown] was East in his recent effort to persuade somebody to support him on the constitutional convention for a balanced budget, he met with the president of the Building Maintenance Workers Union. The name is George Hardy. He is a man who used to be a San Franciscan, and who was very supportive of Pat Brown, and who I'm sure has more than principle, has his heart and

Leary: his early recollections and all his nostalgic remembrances leading him to support Jerry. He is the only union official who has come out so far saying [that] if Carter doesn't behave a little bit more responsibly for labor, their union is likely to go for Brown. That's as far as he's gotten.

But when he was a young local labor leader in that era, he was likely to break with a more conventional endorsement that some of the unions would have and strike out on a very independent and pretty liberal, but never tainted with communism, kind of pitch.

One person we haven't mentioned here is George Collins, who was an assemblyman.

Nathan: Of course, yes!

Leary: George Collins was a curious anomaly whom I respected very much.

The Qualities of George Collins

Leary: Soon after Arthur and I were married was a time when the reapportionment put Gaffney and Collins into the same district, and I was very much a supporter of Collins as I saw him at the legislature. He was a curious person, and his personality was odd, and he was limited in many ways, but he was a man of remarkable integrity and earnestness.

I would write about him, and I've had a lot of fun trying to figure out how to write about his bills so that they became kind of popular and were interesting to people, when George himself wasn't very.

Nathan: He was sort of a pinched-looking, little, grey, sharp-featured man?

Leary: Oh, yes! His story is an interesting story. I discovered that he read all the bills; he knew what was going on; he paid no attention to anything going on up there except his work, which meant, of course, that he was a very limited person. He lived at the Y and went swimming, I think, every day all of his entire life.

I don't know much about his legal practice, but I think he had a lot of immigrant problems and that sort of thing, which meant that Democrats were steering things to him to help him along.

Leary: But he would rise up on the assembly floor and challenge measures and speak about things which needed speaking about and which nobody else would do. I had profound affection and respect for him. He was not personable, he was not an attractive man--even when he was young he always kind of [had a] pinched face, that Irish nose (red at the end of it), and had a funny wry way of speaking.

The reporters and everybody, all the legislators, gave me a bad time about, "Oh, you and George!" But I found that I could usually find out what was going on from him. I never got a bum steer.

Nathan: And he trusted you, obviously.

Leary: I think he came to trust me, and I certainly trusted him. I saw a few cases where other people thought that the narrowness of his point of view prevented him--that he was not an effective legislator because he was not able to bring other people with him. He could not win consensus, but he could call spades when spades needed to be called, and, of course, that gave great stories sometimes. Some of the most dramatic events that I saw up there were because George would stand up and say, "Mr. Speaker, I want to call attention to this bill which I voted 'no' on yesterday, and I want to change my vote, call that bill back for another vote." Things like that, you know. He started some really sensational things.

The minute he spoke, the minute he challenged something, particularly some of the Samish people, everybody in the whole house listened to see what bombshell he was going to drop this time. He was one person who, of course, Samish could not touch at all. There was a bill which the speaker had introduced and which had to do with law enforcement or probation officers, which was a bill serving a private interest, at any rate, which George exposed.

Caylor's Advice##

Leary: What life was like up there was kind of fascinating, at Sacramento. But when I began doing politics and fussed around with the Willkie era and so forth, just in the first few months, not particularly being aware of what I was doing much, but then had to go in January to the legislature, Art Caylor gave me some good advice.

Nathan: What did he say?

Leary: I shared the office with Art Caylor, which was kind of wonderful, because he was a very great friend and a very great mentor, a very respected journalist really. He did a daily column, which was far more a political column than anybody does now. You probably remember it.

Nathan: Yes.

Leary: It was very good, and it was really the most popularly read thing then. Herb Caen was coming along, but you had to read Caylor to kind of get the little insights on what was going on in the world.

Caylor told me that I was going up against men who had been covering Sacramento for so long that I could not possibly compete with them on the same level; I couldn't know as much as they knew. Squire Behrens was the dean of the capitol, and he had been there something like twenty-three years. Royal Jimerson was the Examiner political reporter, and he had been there sixteen years. Don Thomas was the Oakland Tribune reporter; he had been there six or eight years.

I worked closely with and from a desk in the office of the UPI. We worked out a sort of coordinated deal with that. And, of course, I had to rely on the UP staff--it was then UP, not UPI--just to tell me which way to go, because I didn't know anything.

Art assured me that I would not know anything and could not possibly move in on a committee and know as much as all these others who'd been there. And the Los Angeles Times' Chester Hansen, Chic Hansen, had been there for something like a dozen or fifteen years. I can't remember the name of the man from the Los Angeles Daily News. The Examiner man was, oh, a prince of a fellow, Carl Greenberg.

Well, Caylor said, "Go up there with a totally different attitude. Do your own thing. Just write what you see. Don't try to fathom what's going on, because you can't. You can't do it until you've been there for quite a long time. But just keep your eyes open, and write what it looks like to you."

And he used to urge me, actually, to write it in a way which--he always visioned my writing a book, which would have been sensible for me to do. He said, "You go up there like Mary's little lamb; you're pretty dumb, and you don't know what's going on." He said, "I trust you to find out. But give your first impressions of things." Maybe I've told you all this before.

Nathan: No. This is new to me.

Leary: That was very good advice, because I wrote about what color the walls were in the assembly and that they were different in the senate, and what the curtains looked like, and what people were like, and what a day in the life of a senator was--all of this stuff which the other guys wouldn't touch with a ten-foot pole because they were writing big news.

But it got me accustomed to the place, and learning about it, and about what is the life of a bill, where does it go, how does it start, and all that sort of thing. It was my education, and it made stories. It made the thing come alive for people in lots of ways. It's the kind of journalism people do now a lot.

The Motorman as Reader

Leary: And I wrote very conscious of my readers. I think I told you my reader, who he was. I thought of him primarily as a streetcar conductor or motorman who was a public employee, a labor man, affiliated with a labor union, and concerned about labor, working conditions and wages and so forth, but who also was interested in government because he was moving around the city and seeing people a lot and conscious about urban problems and so forth, and was pretty tired at night, and you had to catch his attention.

So, that gave me sort of a focus. And I never, oddly enough, wrote for women. I rarely thought about women, whether they were reading politics or what. I was just writing for my motorman.

Nathan: Was this just your own notion of how to focus?

Leary: Yes. I made him up. It was because I was very conscious of the paper's readership being heavily union and being interested in urban problems and problems of how to get along and make ends meet. And it somewhat grew out of some of the earlier stories that I'd done too.

Nathan: Sure.

The Loan Shark Story

Leary: One of the things that I was just remembering that I had done a good deal about early, long before the war, in my first two or three years as a reporter, had to do with loan sharks, if you ever remember about loan sharks.

Nathan: I do.

Leary: In the Depression time, the newspaper had a constant trail of people coming to the front door wanting to talk to reporters about utterly pathetic stories. A lot of them were people who didn't know where to go to get something to eat. Some of them were people with health problems. And a lot of them were people who didn't have any idea about employment and were outraged because they'd lost their job or outraged for this or that.

I was the one who had to go out and take care of the people who were mad at something. That was probably good training for me.

Nathan: Yes, but hard.

Leary: It was very hard. My first week of being hired on the paper at all, I was interviewing people who wanted jobs on the paper and who were qualified, mature journalists. It turned my stomach. I was just terribly upset, because this was in the heart of the Depression, these were people who had had good jobs, couldn't find jobs, should have been where I was, at least inside the doors. And the city editors and the others--there were no jobs, and so they said, "Mary Ellen, you go and interview them." In that whole troupe of troubled people--and I look now when you go into a newspaper office and see the armed guard at the front door making you sign your way in so that no troublemakers come up and bother the city room at all, and I think what a difference it was, you know, how in those days we had the--

Nathan: People had access to you in a different way?

Leary: Yes. But one of the patterns was people who got themselves trapped in borrowing money from one small loan company after another, after another, and the thing pyramided, and they didn't know how to get out of it.

Nathan: And they would come and talk to you about this?

Leary: And they would come to the paper, yes. I suppose they went to all the papers. So, I got kind of interested in that, and I think that was the first thing I ever talked to Jack Shelley about in my life. He had carried some of the legislation.

Nathan: He was a congressman, wasn't he, at this time?

Leary: No. He was a state senator from San Francisco, and at the same time executive vice--what do they call him?

Nathan: He was a labor official?

Leary: Yes. He was executive secretary-treasurer, I guess, or something like that, executive secretary anyway, for the State Labor Council.

Nathan: Right.

Leary: So that he was this top state labor official at the same time that he was state senator. You can see it was inevitable that with the News being labor supportive, I would feel interested in labor legislation.

Shelley had carried legislation to put a limit on how much can be charged on interest rates, and it's interesting now. This is talked about occasionally in the financial pages because the bill was written purposely to exempt banks and certain lending corporations, and I guess savings and loans got themselves in there, and then finally department stores were able to get themselves in as an exemption too.

I don't know the history of the small loan company industry, but I know that it was rapidly expanding through the Depression times. One of the great scandals was the effort of small loan companies to break usury laws where they existed or to prevent their being imposed. Shelley got one through which had a lot more holes in it than he would have liked, or maybe he knew it and he had to accept the compromises if he was going to get anything through. But at least it put a limit on how much they could charge these little guys who came in for personal loans.

And he had a dramatic incident of somebody offering him a bribe at that time over this in which he raised Cain. One of the first really good stories I ever had was his telling me about, "How I kicked So-and-So out."

Nathan: Well, that is dramatic!

Leary: So, that had been another one of those newspaper crusades that I got into and worked through, with, of course, the editors and editorial writers guiding it or directing me. I remember talking a friend of mine, who was teaching at San Francisco State but who had been at Stanford with me, into going with me, for us both pretending we were married to ask for a loan and to go through the whole process of finding what we had to do to get a loan, and how fast we could get it, and how much interest we would get, and so forth. Although we had various people who came to us with their stories, and we would demand documentation and proof and all that before we would write anything about them, I thought it was going

Leary: to be much better if we could actually go ourselves and find out that they were, you see, pyramiding the loan in a way which did evade the law. They were charging more than they should have been charging per annum by lending you money for only three months at a time, and then you would come back in and float a new loan because you couldn't pay that--

Nathan: Really a trap.

Leary: Yes, and it was terrible. That same thing was one of the major problems that was coming along--and, of course, I think automobile purchasing at the same time was one of the things people kept getting into hock about and couldn't ever find their way out of.

The Legal Aid Societies became very active in coping with that kind of problem. I used to work with the Legal Aid Society in San Francisco, with the lawyers there, about what to do with this case or that, and how did the thing become bigger, and I think through them actually was led to Shelley. I was thinking of it because, going back from remembering my first contacts up at Sacramento, that was one that I had a slightly early touch with.

Cultivating Sources and Establishing Trust

Nathan: How did you get people to trust you and to be willing to share information with you? Was that a problem?

Leary: Oh, I thought it was going to be a terrible problem! I couldn't believe they would tell me anything, of course! I thought, "How on earth do you ever find out anything? And especially because, not being a man, I won't be able to sit up and play poker with them at night, which the fellows were doing, and go over to their luncheon parties, which the lobbyists set up, and none of that kind of access which the reporters took for granted and would drop in on."

I think the reporters did a pretty good job on the whole of maintaining some objective removal from the insidious kind of socializing which is part of political influence, but nevertheless they had an access to it, and I didn't have any access at all to the male camaraderie which prevailed in the legislature. And I thought I would never find out anything.

Fortunately, there were some extraordinary lobbyists, such as Dick Graves with the League of California Cities. Did you know him?

Nathan: Yes.

Leary: I thought you must have. And later on, not that early, the County Supervisors Association had Bill MacDougall, and the League had Bud Carpenter, later. They would sort of help me, they plus some of the people who were lobbying for social welfare agencies. Of course, they were not so much trying to help me as get their own views and interests conveyed to the press, and they had special interests, but since they were not directly related to financial gain or not to Artie Samish they seemed a lot purer in those days. In contrast to others, they were wise, objective, and disinterested.

One of the early people that I found that I could talk with and liked talking with and could learn from, and he was sufficiently vain to like to talk, to help me learn, was Rolland Vandegrift, who was the first to create and inhabit the role of legislative--not counsel, but the--

Nathan: Analyst?

Leary: The staff person for the Senate Finance Committee, who became ultimately legislative analyst--Alan Post succeeded him. But Vandegrift had been state director of Finance, perhaps for Merriam for a little bit, who knew and understood state finance brilliantly.

Nathan: Yes, that's crucial.

Leary: And, having learned that you had to master math for understanding election returns, I understood pretty quickly that the Finance Committee was the place where things really happened.

But I was terribly naive, and terribly unsure of myself.

Nathan: It would be terrifying, yes.

Leary: I look at young women today, and they are so confident; it overwhelms me. I never believed that the job was going to last more than a week, and if it lasted one week it might last a month.

I remember talking to Bill Rich, whom I came to respect very much, who was from Marysville and was senator, was the Finance Committee chairman; I'd heard so many stories about him. He was sitting having lunch at a counter at the Senator Hotel, and I sat down next to him. They all called me just Mary--"Well, Mary, how are you doing?" and "Are you learning anything?" and "Are you getting some stories? That's fine, Mary," in a kind of patronizing way.

Leary: So, I asked him, "May I ask you a personal question?" "Yes, of course." I said, "Well is it true that you own a lot of whorehouses in Marysville, because that's what I keep hearing?" And he laughed!

Nathan: [laughter] Out of your proper little mouth.

Leary: Well, you know, it was my general idea that if you heard all these stories, you ought to go to the source and find out. But, of course, I don't think he ever said yes or no.

Nathan: What an adventure for you! Just feeling your way the whole time.

Leary: Well, I remember just constantly thinking, "Something is going on, and I'm not able to know what it is. And what is it really?" It was two or three years before I was able to begin to pick up which were important bills and where the action was. You don't pick that up; you get told by somebody, if people begin to have confidence in you and tell you things. I soon detected what the Samish situation was.

Nathan: Did the News have a view about Samish?

Leary: Yes. And they had earlier had campaigns and had editorials about this bad influence and so forth. But I don't remember anybody telling me about Samish when I went up. I don't remember Art Caylor or anybody mentioning Samish particularly.

Nathan: Nobody briefed you at all?

Leary: No. "Go up and find out what's going on."

Tommy Maloney would drive me up occasionally. Often I would go on the ferry from San Francisco, take the ferry over and take the train up. I didn't own an automobile. But Tommy Maloney, I found, would usually take Squire Behrens. He would meet him at the Chronicle corner, and so I would make a point then of getting to the Chronicle corner too and getting a ride with him.

Nathan: Would you stay overnight during the session?

Leary: And then stayed at the Senator [Hotel], yes. Everybody more or less stayed at the Senator. I had the same room all the time that I was there, 420 or something like that; the same floor Samish was on, I found out later.

Nathan: How many years were you doing this beat?

Leary: Well, I was married in '49 and continued actively until Gini was born, which was in '52. She was born during the Eisenhower convention. You know, I date things from elections to conventions. And I after that went back after my six-month maternity leave ended and continued covering politics some. Vernon O'Reilly followed me really, covered while I was gone, and I think was most unhappy to see me come back. [chuckles] And I did some occasional further times, and I don't remember whether he was ill. I think he had a heart attack or something for a while, and so I went up and covered the legislature for a while.

Then they kind of put me on a city assignment; I mean, writing about urban problems. And then ultimately I became associate editor when Paul Edwards retired. I wrote some editorials, but there was usually someone else--an editor of the editorial page--who enjoyed writing them more than I did and I would hunch them, or talk with staff and others to develop facts for them. I was interested in broad editorial positions--what we should be advocating or supporting.

Nathan: You had big articles on the editorial page, big spreads.

Leary: Yes. I used to write sort of what would be called "op ed" pieces now.

Nathan: Yes, yes.

Leary: Big analysis things; it was marvelous that they let me do that, really.

Regional Issues and the Golden Gate Authority

Nathan: Yes. And you were getting into regional government then, weren't you?

Leary: Yes, and was fascinated by it, because that was a time when there was a big drive to start a port authority here.

Nathan: Yes. The Golden Gate Authority.

Leary: Yes. And there had been a long period of legislative studies of the ports of San Francisco Bay. I think it really kind of began when the Stockton Port became important and San Francisco and Oakland got very worried about what was happening; Oakland was almost nothing then, but San Francisco particularly.

Leary: And there was a big movement. I'm not sure but what it would have been a wise thing--I think it would have been wise to have had the ports in one kind of common group if somebody could have planned it, except there was too much local interest involved. We never could get a harmonious--.

But the big authority concept then wanted to take ports, airports, and bridges, and put them all together, and use the money from the bridges for the authority, let them decide what transportation usage should go on and so forth. Well, I came gradually to see flaws in that, that it removed revenue from any access for other problems, and it set this agency so much apart from the rest of the governmental structure.

Well, there were some hearings going on about the problems of the New York Port Authority, fortunately, and I went to the library and looked them up and read them.

Nathan: That's interesting.

Leary: I read quite a lot about the testimony of what the flaws were in the New York Port Authority, where the money went pouring into more and more automobile transportation facilities.

Nathan: And less rapid transit?

Leary: And less and less rapid transit. And it also was totally removed; it never could be used for anything else, for city needs. I mean, you had New York's resources dwindling while the Port Authority's were increasing.

I encountered some people at the University of California in the Department of Political Science who were astute about this, and I went and looked them up; I tried to find out. Well, Gulick was here giving some lectures.

Nathan: Luther?

Leary: Yes. And also somebody who's now down at UCLA. And I met, oh, all kinds of transportation people who came through here.

Nathan: It wasn't John Bollens, was it, at UCLA?

Leary: Yes, he was one, but I was thinking of Henry Fagan.

I became convinced that it was a very unhealthy thing and might have become the sort of thing that the Golden Gate Bridge District was, a little bunch of czars running their own world.

Nathan: That would be what, middle '50s pretty much?

Leary: Yes, that's mid-'50s, yes.

The Legislative Session of 1947

Leary: The session of '47 was a very exciting session because it was heavily involved in the problems of school finance; heavily involved, as I think '45 also was, in alleged Communist influences-- the Jack Tenney Committee; and heavily involved in the fight over whether or not to increase gas taxes, and by how much, in order to build the freeway system. Those were good rousing fights, and at the same time various disputes about water, which held a lot of the interest in the senate particularly, agricultural interests dominating. Ben Hulse was from San Diego, but who was the senator from the Fresno area? Bradford Crittendon. His son became district attorney over there and probably is a judge around there now. And then the son of Supreme Court Judge Jesse W. Carter, Oliver Carter, who was senator from, I guess, the Redding area, his home town. The debates over water policy between Crittendon and Carter were simply fantastic.

Nathan: Did you think that they were factual?

Leary: Yes, yes. And they were violently opposed to each other on points of view. It was to some extent the reclamation policy. I'm not sure that 160 acres got into it, but it was what to do with the water, and how much to charge for water, and this kind of thing.

Nathan: Did they get into the protection of the Delta? Did that enter into it at that early stage?

Leary: The State Water Plan had not been developed.

Nathan: That's right. That came later.

Leary: The State Water Plan was in incubus.

Nathan: Yes. So, this would be federal water policy?

Leary: Well, it was state policy, but it was the first efforts to develop the Feather River, which was the birth of the State Water Plan.

Nathan: Yes, right.

Leary: And the state engineer, Edward Hyatt, who had worked for years on trying to develop a state water plan. I now know, and if I could go back and listen again I'm sure I would understand much more about the nuances of the debates between Oliver Carter, who came from Redding, and Crittendon.

III HARVARD AND THE NIEMAN FELLOWSHIP

[Interview 3: June 8, 1979]##

Criteria and Issues

Nathan: Now you're back from the Nieman Fellowship meetings?

Leary: Yes. I was at Harvard this June, 1979, for three days as part of a committee which was doing the final review on candidates for next year's Nieman Fellowships. And out of about eighty-five total applicants, we narrowed it down, unfortunately, to twelve. That's a horrible thing to have to go through. And of the twelve, interestingly, four are women.

Nathan: I see. Is this more than usual?

Leary: It's the same number of women in the group of twelve as they had this last year. Apparently this year was a remarkably good year for both males and females, and they all felt that it was an awfully stimulating Nieman class.

Nathan: Weren't you one of the first two women admitted to the Nieman Fellowship?

Leary: Yes, two of us were admitted, Charlotte Fitzhenry from Chicago, and myself. The Nieman program has been running I think now forty-three years, something like that. It was a fund established by a former publisher of the Milwaukee Journal, or rather by his widow, and given to Harvard for the improvement of journalism without any strings tied to it or definition of how to use it. Harvard did a great deal of anguishing about what to do and finally decided to set up what was then unique. I think '41 or '42 or maybe '40 was the first class, whatever that makes us; anyway, maybe it's all older than I was indicating.



Nieman Fellows, 1945-1946. [Mary Ellen Leary, center front]

Leary: They decided to bring back sort of experienced journalists. You must have three and preferably five years of experience for eligibility. Most of them have been over twenty-five years of age. They come back and study anything they choose in a free, very unstructured program. They are not studying journalism. They are studying programs in depth which they want.

I was interested to see this year that many of them were asking to take the same things that I was interested in--constitutional law, economics, all kinds of American history, and background in American institutions. We were interested in social problems like welfare and so forth when I was there, but this year they're quite interested in not so much racial tensions, but all kinds of violence, and what makes mobs occur, and how do you control them, and what does this mean in society, and that sort of thing. Conflict, I mean, in society was an element which many reporters currently found themselves interested in.

I was there in the year '45-'46, from fall of '45 until June of '46; it's a full school year. I had applied the year before and had been refused. They had not had women before. We had a member of the San Francisco News staff, Bob Elliott, who had been on the business reporting staff and had done a very brilliant job of analyzing the industrial changes in California as a result of the war, the great impetus in not only new kinds of businesses, not just shipbuilding, but great changes in relationship to Eastern steel and that kind of thing. He had been close to Kaiser and ultimately went into Kaiser's staff; in fact, worked personally with Henry Kaiser for the rest of his life afterwards. But Bob Elliott, having been a Nieman Fellow, was kind enough to urge me to apply and, while he was there, to urge Harvard to think about accepting women, a great blow to their traditions.

Arthur Schlesinger and His Role

Leary: There was at Harvard, in the History Department, Professor Arthur Schlesinger, the father of the present historian. He was an innovator in social history, the senior Arthur Schlesinger, in telling history in terms not of battles and so forth, but in social change, and was quite remarkable as a lecturer, and very popular, and a very wonderful guy. He was married to a woman who was interested in the women's movement, who had worked for the suffragette movement when she was young. I think she, Margaret Schlesinger, persuaded him to--why not let women come?

Leary: I did not when I was there realize that Arthur Schlesinger had been a particular advocate of women in the program. But he met me for lunch my first day and was extremely charming and helpful and solicitous and interested all through the year. He happened to be very close to the Nieman group. He was constantly with it and was in a faculty advisor type role with it. And it grew, I'm sure, out of his feeling for history; his sensitivity to social things made him open to the press as a force, and I think he was extremely excited about the idea of Harvard undertaking a program that would be intensive education for experienced journalists. This led him into really working closely with the program, not just to help in the admissions and help decide who should come, but sort of being with us on all the programs.

In addition to each student studying whatever he wants, there's a good deal of group action. I mean, they have lunches, and they have twice a week seminars in which special lecturers from Harvard are brought in. So, no matter what you're studying--maybe you're off in some esoteric field like business or medicine or something like that--you will get an exposure to some of the most engaging and top people in law and in anthropology and in physics and so forth.

When we were there, the great excitement was in the development of fission and fusion, and the atomic bomb, and the analysis by physicists of what the future might be in space exploration, and that sort of thing. We were almost bombarded with all kinds of fantastic theorists and practical people in relation to the probable development of space. I don't believe anything that's happened since then was not anticipated in the lectures that we heard, including the space platforms and the shuttle and this sort of thing.

So, the program definitely tries to bring the most exciting thought that's available on the campus to the Niemans, as well as allowing them to concentrate on a special field if they wish, or sample as widely as they can.

Nathan: Did you then get to know the people in your class relatively well?

Leary: Yes.

Nathan: Were they a stimulating group?

Leary: Very, very, indeed. And when you leave I'll give you a copy, or if I can't give it to you now I'll get some extras and see that you get a copy, of a quarterly called Nieman Reports.

Nathan: I have seen it from time to time.

Leary: Well, the current one--the four women in this last year's session won a point in getting it focused entirely on women journalists. So, it talks about the initial year, and it tells a good deal about women's problems as journalists and in their painful adjustments between domestic demands and career demands.

Charlotte Fitzhenry, who had been with me, who was admitted at the same time, an Associated Press reporter in Chicago--she had come from Indiana. She was, I think, then covering the Chicago Stock Exchange and was the first woman to be on the floor of the Stock Exchange there. She was interested in city planning particularly and took many of her courses at MIT.

Journalists with College Degrees

Leary: Anyway, what's interesting about that as I look back on it is that when I first went into the city room, the younger men, the people about my own age or just a little bit ahead of me, who were like assistant city editors and assistant here and there, were the first generation of people to come in who had college degrees. Now, I think I've mentioned that before. This idea that it was appropriate for journalists to be college trained was just getting great acceptance, and now the Harvard thing was an additional step on that.

I see today, you know, much more expectation of greater education on the part of journalists than we ever dreamed of when I first started out. Stanford and Michigan have initiated advanced programs of study for journalists that are very much modeled after the Nieman program, and they also select about a dozen or something like that each year. I'm not sure where their funds come from.

Well, that gets me off into my career bit.

Nathan: I might just ask this. It seems as though your mind was opened tremendously by the experience. Could you tell what effect this had on your later work?

Leary: It would be nice to say, "Of course, I was able to do much better."

Nathan: Were you at the News then?

Leary: Yes. In fact, my career was very long at the News, from when I began, waiting to be a reporter, as secretary to the city editor, up until the News folded in '64.

When I came back immediately after the Nieman year, there was a recall election on for Mayor Roger Lapham, and I was confronted instantly with a forced return to reality and away from academia into finding out what that was all about and reporting on it.

I remember one of the critical issues was the merger of the two streetcar lines, the transit lines having been so critical a part of San Francisco's political history anyway, the franchises back in Abe Ruef's day and that sort of thing. What, I guess, Lapham considered maybe one of his achievements was that he did finally get the Muni to absorb the old Market Street Railway. And he was being recalled. I can't remember whether that occurred afterwards and the recall--but the recall kind of arose out of protests against this. It arose out of a number of things that people were unhappy with him about. But he won; he defeated it very handily, actually.

Evaluating the Nieman Experience

Leary: But I mention that because one's never able really to say, "Yes, I translated my course in law." I indulged there my desire for very academic work. I had a course from Roscoe Pound in elements of the common law; and a marvelous teacher, McIlwain, whose first name I think was Charles, in the principles of the Democratic process, which went back to Greece and came all the way through the early English charters for the colonies. It was a very good sweep into Democratic institutions through that, and constitutional law. Courses of this kind, which I'm sure have given me a sense of confidence about a lot of approaches, but I don't know that I can say, "Yes, I did that story better."

The whole experience marks you and gives you a sense of one achievement, which is nice, although I took a lot of ribbing from newspaper people for the year at Harvard and sort of tried to show that it hadn't changed me and I was still a professional.

And immediately after the election, of course, the legislative things came along, and one got sucked up into the process of day-to-day coverage awfully fast. I did not sit down and write pundit pieces after that; probably a better mind than mine would have. A number of people have moved from this kind of experience into

Leary: editorial writing and that sort of thing. I've always prized the dealing with data and the empirical experience of reporting, and I suspect that comes out of some weaknesses of my own, but it seemed to me important to substantiate what you're writing about and deal with facts.

Most of the people in the Nieman program were good, hard, tough reporters who were interested also in facts, not in spinning theories. So, I would say that my association back there reinforced my confidence as a reporter and my pride in it.

Nathan: I'm sure it must have given you a certain perspective.

Leary: Yes, I think so.

Nathan: I would agree with you that reporting is at least as high a calling as editing.

Leary: Well, I don't know. It lays the groundwork maybe, but I'm not sure that it's as high.

But the thing that it did was to give me a sense of confidence that a kind of idealism about reporting, wanting reporting to be better, which I found old-timers somewhat cynical about--I found myself in contact with people who shared that. And they brought many journalists in to talk to Niemans, and they still do this--top publishers, top people from Washington, and so forth--perhaps less now because many of the people are from the eastern states and they have some, maybe, acquaintance. But many of them are young and from small papers and have not had contact with the big names and the columnists and this kind of thing, and so they usually have two or three come and talk to the Niemans.

I found a real pattern of concern about integrity of journalism, and about innovation, and hunting for the why behind the story instead of being satisfied with just a mere recital of events, and also a sense of journalism's place in--I don't want to say political reform, but in looking for a better way, that journalism had a place in working toward an improved world. It was exciting to find that the journalists I rubbed shoulders with then had that same feeling.

One of them was Leon Svirsky, who became editor of Science magazine and one of the founders of it. Another one, Bob Manning, is present editor of the Atlantic Monthly. Others are currently teaching journalism. Several have retired, but others are doing editorial page op ed kinds of pieces, that sort of thing. None of them went to Washington in a big way, except Manning, who was top information man in the State Department for a while.

Leary: But our class did a sort of book about how to start a newspaper and be independent, because PM had started, and there was a great deal of concern about breaking journalism away from the dominance of publishers.

Nathan: There were no publishers in your class? In other words, the Niemans were reporters, not publishers?

Leary: Definitely yes. The experience at Harvard is offered to reporters, not to publishers. But I found it interesting that one publisher was in the review committee which met to select finalists for this year, or rather next year's Nieman class.

Publishers are now very interested in and supportive of the program. At my point they were highly sceptical. They have some justification in being afraid that their good people who may become Niemans will be led off into other jobs and be stolen from them. Usually the Nieman is asked to make a commitment, for which nobody can be held, to return to his paper for a year, so that his editor and publisher can be asked to give the leave of absence with an understanding that they're going to get the reporter back. But there's a good deal of experience of that not working, or the fellow leaving immediately afterwards. However, in many of the papers the reporter says strongly, "I'm part of this community and I want to go back to it," or "part of this particular paper that has a reach into the community."

So, that's probably all and more than you want to know about the Niemans. But when I went up to Sacramento to report, I--

Nieman Applicants: Qualities and Choices

Nathan: Could I go back a minute for more on the Niemans?

Leary: Yes, all right.

Nathan: Could you say a little of what you're looking for? I saw you with these boxes of applications.

Leary: Yes.

Nathan: What were you looking for when you evaluated them?

Leary: Well, applications come to Harvard totally on the initiative of the people in the field, reporters who hear about the program. We were discussing the fact that largely people hear about it through other

Leary: Niemans, and somebody spots a smart reporter and says, "Why don't you apply?" I did that to a number of people who did apply and got accepted. We were a little worried about it becoming sort of the "old boys" program, you know, because one hands it on to another, and we were a little worried about whether that reaches far enough.

A candidate submits a biography of his journalistic life--what he's done, and what his experience has been generally, and what he made of it, what was important to him of it--and then a second piece outlining his intentions, how to use the year at Harvard; and a third item, which consists of many pieces--sets of letters of recommendation. I'm not sure how many are minimum or maximum. Some had three or four, and some had a dozen. Then copies, and I think from something like ten to twelve articles, examples of their work.

I became aware of what I was looking for, knowing the program and knowing the opportunities there--somebody who really feels that his career is at a stage where he's learned a lot and is at a point where he wants to learn much more right now, and I'm using the "he" in generic broad terms. Many indicated that this was a point that either was convenient or was a turning point. They had finished a certain amount of years in the field, or they'd been out and covering for a suburban paper and understood that they would be brought into the metropolitan center and that if they could have a year before that happened it would be wonderful.

A couple of them had been abroad and were going to come back. One had been abroad and felt that he'd lost touch with the United States and wanted the year because he felt he could do better reporting abroad if he came back. So, the feeling that this year is pivotal somehow in your career is one element.

Another element is just the zest for being a reporter and the excitement about it; an awful lot of people wrote--you could feel it in them. And also a commitment that you felt was a lifetime commitment, that this was what they were going to do all their lives. There were a few people who applied who had sort of stumbled into it and were fascinated by it and, of course, they said, "I expect to be a reporter." But you could sense that this didn't have that idealistic, "This is the greatest thing that I could ever do with my talents," a kind of a sense of serving their community and the world by doing it. An idealistic sense is what I was--I was really delighted and moved to find how much of it there was, but I also was aware that I was looking, I guess, a little bit for it.

Leary: Some of the people's letters about what they would do at Harvard indicated a lack of understanding--they just were all over the lot and didn't have any focus, and others were terribly narrow. I mean, one of them wanted to study, for instance, just the brain, in the medical school, and hoped to do a great deal of writing about just the brain in his future journalism. I happen never to have discussed that with anybody, but he did not turn up in the group for personal interviews; and my guess is because if he wants to write a book about the brain, that's a specialized field and go ahead and do it, but it is not quite being a broad overall journalist.

A number had specialized fields, of course, that they wanted to write about--urban problems, or economics, or business, or labor, business and labor relations into the future. A number of applicants from the South were very concerned about the immense changes in the economics and the social life of the South, not so much race relations as industrial relations, changing the mode of living in the South.

(When this tape does run out, I will take just a couple of moments to go out in the kitchen.)

Nathan: All right. Fine. This shows versatility, I think, that you can keep your mind on more than one thing. We can stop at any moment.

Leary: No, this is fine.

Nathan: I should probably ask whether there were minority applicants and how they came out.

Leary: There were very exciting minority applicants, yes. There were probably five, maybe, in the total group of eighty-five, blacks. Several of them just obviously weren't going to make it. There's no point in going into all the reasons, but they were not.

Two of them stood out instantly as just being superb and for the zest of their enthusiastic reports about their work and their life. One of them was from Philadelphia, who had a good deal of the South experience and who was reporting mostly ghetto stories about the problems of the blacks in Philadelphia and who had won a Pulitzer.

Another was from--I can't remember whether it was Minneapolis or Milwaukee, to tell you the truth, at the moment without checking my files--who had made a very good adaptation to his life as a reporter--he'd been to college and then gone there to get a job--into the white man's world. So that, for instance, a judge wrote saying that this had been the first time he had ever dealt with a black on an equal professional level, as a peer, when this reporter

Leary: came in and was asking about stories, and that he found it very difficult to accept him, and that that had been about four years ago. And he said, "We had lunch while he told me about applying for this, and I realized that I no longer thought of him as black at all. I thought of him as just a darn good reporter that I want to support."

The Philadelphia guy was very much conscious that he was, as a black, reporting about blacks. The contrast between the experiences of the two was interesting.

We had some others. We had no Mexican-Americans, although there was one Hispanic. One Oriental made it to the final interviews but was not accepted, but I think will be in one of the other programs. So, there were minorities, and everyone was most excited about these two blacks. They thought they would probably be among the very best.

Interestingly enough--and none of these names have been announced yet, but I'm not going to worry about the disclosure off into the history. A news photographer from the Hearst paper in Boston was accepted, and he was a fantastic news reporter. He carries about three or four different radios in his car.

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Leary: Well, he's a photographer, and his job is to photograph breaking news. His passionate dedication was to not just be a reporter and get on the scene and so forth, but to get absolutely the best picture possible. He had won a Pulitzer for one of the pictures, which was just absolutely heart-wrenching, from, I guess, a fire, but of two children falling. Do you remember that?

Nathan: Yes, yes.

Leary: Yes. It was a fantastic picture, with a baby and a little bit older child falling.

He said, "I understand photography. I know what I'm doing. I command that field now." He is not literate. He is not at all a person broadly educated. He said, "I can be more of a journalist than just a photographer." He said he hated using that phrase "just a photographer." But he said, "I can be more. I want to understand editing. I want to be able to write something more than the captions on my pictures, I think. I want it up in my head."

I believe that he had no idea that he would be accepted. He was laughing and saying that it was the first time he'd ever been interviewed and that it was an absolute agony to him. He almost,

Leary: in his fear of the thing, had turned around and not come to the appointment. He had no real faith that he was going to get it, and he thought putting himself through this ordeal was absurd.

Amazingly enough, everyone felt he was the kind of person who-- that year would make a great deal of difference in his life. Basically what they're looking for is, who will this year most help? And so the class winds up to be a mixture of very sophisticated, advanced, very mature journalists who are at a key point in their careers, who clearly will get a sort of second wind and new start from this. Plus, the two blacks and this fellow--and then there were some interesting smalltown people, from small papers, who made applications. A couple of them didn't make it. A couple of them were women editors from small papers who worked their heads off and who had great editing ability, who really put things together very well, who just kind of got edged out by some others.

However, one woman who was accepted was an editor and had reports from her paper of the great confidence in her as an editor and worked apparently very comfortably giving assignments and working with staff, bringing young reporters along, and had great competence in selection of what to emphasize and how to get innovative stories and that sort of thing. It was exciting to see how good she was, and clear-minded, and how responsive all of the selecting committee was to her.

Another woman who was selected is interested in the labor field, labor and business relations in the future, not merely in covering labor, but in looking at what's happening in the evolving relations between management and unions, management and non-unions. I was most impressed by her. She was one of my very high recommendations.

When she arrived, she sort of astonished all of us by looking extremely pregnant. I knew everybody was waiting to see how would we ask her something about how she was going to manage this. She finally said--and brought it up herself, which I was glad she did-- that her baby was going to be born in about a week, and that her husband was going to have a sabbatical and would be able to be at Harvard with her, and that they were confident that this was a good thing. She also was accepted. So, I was glad to see that somebody with--oh, you know. This is really the modern woman!

Nathan: Isn't it!

Leary: Yes. To be able to win a year at Harvard just before she has her baby. She's kind of wonderful.

Leary: I stress how exciting it was to see the idealism about being journalists that came through. We had, incidentally, television and radio people too; it was not just press. I find myself not using the word "media" as much as people do who are outside of it, because I think of myself more identified with press.

All of them spoke constantly about wanting to do stories that show what's happening, changes in society, wanting to be on top of changes to interpret them for people and make people able to live better and preserve our institutions. There was a great deal of interest in American history and concern about finding out the origins of our institutions, where they came from, now, so that through the periods of change--reporters wanted consciously to know how to report about change without reporting in a destructive way. People talk so much about the negativism of the press, but there was so much that was positive in what their aspirations were that came through.

Well, many of them wanted law and economics particularly. Now, I believe when I was back there that people were interested in just about the same things--a little bit more into labor relations, a little bit more into social change things and urban planning and science, when I was there, much more concern about science than I found in the current class.

So, well, that's the Nieman program, and that's the idea about continuing education in journalism, which I think now is sort of established as appropriate.

Nieman Women as Harvard Students

Leary: But I was not aware as a woman that there was as striking a break from tradition in admitting me as I was assured about this year when I was back East. A former Boston Globe reporter and editor, who was in the first Nieman class, who then ultimately became the curator, the director, of the program, now is retired and in his eighties. He still gives three times a week news comments on the radio in Boston. Louis Lyons. Louis told me, first of all, that President Conant was extremely sceptical about women being accepted to the program. He had been sceptical in the first place about dealing with journalists in the Harvard environment. He thought it was maybe too alien. But the idea of bringing women in also was even more a departure from tradition.

Leary: The Niemans were admitted to Harvard technically as members of Harvard College. They were registered as students of Harvard College. We were advised formally as a class; we became students of Harvard College. Charlotte and I, then, were the first women to be students of Harvard College.

Radcliffe students had been admitted to Harvard classes just during the war. Previous to that, Harvard professors had gone to Radcliffe to teach. It had been established only a few blocks away with the idea of sharing the riches of Harvard, but the original idea had been that Harvard would come to Radcliffe and teach. But now during the war with the, of course, depleted student ranks, they allowed the women to come in. So, there were a number of women, not many.

The young men, many of them still in uniform, were just beginning to come back to the campus in '45. They were coming back on their GI bill, and some of them coming back while they were still commissioned.

We were not singled out as women, the two of us, because there were a number of Radcliffe women. When we went to the library, we were told that the Radcliffe women sat over in one area in a little set-aside kind of nook and were not to use the general library. I simply refused to go and sit with the Radcliffe women, because I was not a Radcliffe woman; I was a Harvard student. It was a constant struggle that I had to make of being tapped on the shoulder and told to leave and told that I could not sit in the main part of Widener [Library], and my replying that of course I had the privilege and was going to use it.

And only this time laughingly they told me that that became a terrible fuss, that the librarian had said, "Look, we will take all the books she wants. We will deliver them to her any place she wants. Just keep her out of here. We are not going to have women in the main study area of the reading rooms of Widener Library." But I didn't realize it then. Women were filtering in and going and sitting properly in the Radcliffe corner, but I wouldn't do that.

I went in for the fun of it to Widener this year to look and, of course, there are women all over the place now. So, it was kind of fun to recall my experience.

I suppose that having that year gave me a good deal of confidence and, as I say, because I found that my viewpoint, which seemed sometimes kind of lonely, was shared by a lot of people, a sort of idealism about being a journalist. When I went to

Leary: Sacramento, the men had all been there so much longer--a couple of them were college students, but they had not particularly the academic approach.

An interesting thing happened. I handed you a copy of the article about Leo McCarthy, my first bit in the Chronicle. I had a letter the other day from Squire Behrens. He is invalided at the Veterans Hospital in Palo Alto and is very fragile. He must be in his late eighties. I had written him a letter at Christmas time, and he wrote in response to that and in response to seeing my name in his paper.

It was very interesting because I don't believe I asked him anything of this kind. Perhaps I may have said something in my letter to him about it. But he volunteered some comments about the differences between the Chronicle and the Los Angeles Times in his era, and pointed out that he felt the Times had become too much intertwined with the Republican party.

Nathan: That was in his era.

Leary: In his era.

Nathan: Which would be the '30s and '40s?

Leary: Twenties. From post-World War I. Yes, from mid-'20s, and '30s, and into the '40s, and I suppose up to the choice of Nixon.

It's an interesting letter for this insight. He said he felt that he had purposely tried to make sure that Republicans did not feel they could dictate what he was writing. It's interesting because most people felt that Behrens simply did cover Republicans. He identified a couple of times when he had favored Democrats and had urged the paper and, I guess, supported their endorsing Democrats. I believe Jack Shelley, when he was in Congress, was the first Democrat to get their endorsement; I think, but I'm not sure.

But he felt that the Republican party really had quite a lot of control over the Los Angeles Times' political reporting, which is interesting.

Nathan: It is.

Leary: Yes. And his having said it just now--it's sort of interesting for him to have made the effort, obviously hard for him to write.

IV THE OLSON ERA AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

Democrats: Their Calibre and Style

Leary: The Democratic party at that time in the '40s, primarily in the legislature and around the time I began covering politics, was represented by public officials who had come out of the Olson era, and they constituted a group, many of them Irish from the Bay Area--not a machine, not particularly cohesive as a political bloc, but what they had in common was following Olson into politics, swept in on the Depression era wave of protest against Republicans and against moneyed interests. Many of them personally quite poor, and without resources, made politics their way of life. Some, of course, were businessmen, in insurance, or some were lawyers. But they came to the legislature as spokesmen for the poor or elderly or those on welfare and they made a career of that role. Some who came in on that wave were bright and diligent--such as Bill Rosenthal in Los Angeles and Julian Beck, both of them outstanding, and they became judges and had very honorable careers.

Nathan: Are you thinking of the legislature now or of administrative officials?

Leary: I'm thinking of the legislature, but I'm also thinking of other public officials. Bob Kenny, as attorney general, had, of course, gotten his start in the state senate, from Los Angeles, and I believe he succeeded Olson, I think--to Olson's seat. He had a lot of vigor and sort of was looked at as the leader and the head of the party, and to see where he was going to take it next.

But in the legislature the Democrats were not generally of as high an intellectual calibre as many of the Republicans. The Republicans tended to be far more leader-like than the Democrats did. There were an awful lot of strange people who came in during the Olson sweep, very strange people who came in.

Nathan: Let's have some names, if you think of them.

Leary: Well, I think of Bernard Brady in San Francisco, and Eddie Gaffney. And I think of a fellow from Alameda, also with an Irish name; it was Bernard Sheridan. And I think of--oh, there was a funny character from Los Angeles, John B. Pelletier. He came from a very poor district and got arrested a couple of nights before election, maybe Friday before the weekend, and was in jail all the time. And he won with the biggest vote that he'd ever had, because they took a picture of him behind bars and ran it in the Times, and that really went over great in his district. I do think his election-eve arrest and big vote funny, but I remember now he was arrested for putting up signs on the posts where they were forbidden. And I'm sure he was looked upon in the Depression era, among Republican powers in Los Angeles, as a pretty low type himself. But he was a passionate speaker and probably a good advocate for his district.

Johnnie Evans from Los Angeles. Perhaps that name doesn't mean anything to you, but Johnnie Evans was a guy who was kind of hungry a lot of the time. He wound up working openly with the lobbyist for the old people.

Nathan: McLain?

Leary: McLain. And making speeches and so on and so forth. One of my great scoops was when I got Johnnie Evans, who told me this, to tell it to me again and sign a by-line story saying, "Yes, sure, I take money from McLain. I'm on his lecture circuit, and I've been doing this for years."

It was fun to get it, and fun especially because I decided the best way to do it was to ask him to dictate it to me. In these days so many stories are written and published without verification of the source. I tried hard not to accept stories in which I could not quote the source, and I tried to tell people, "Don't tell me things off-the-record." I had a strong feeling that the public ought to have as much as possible the identification of the sources.

There were a number of stories in those days which I'm sure would be published today, but which we didn't publish and which I never felt I could get a publisher to agree to handle, because my sources simply refused to be disclosed or I didn't feel that I could identify them.

But when Johnnie Evans, having drinks with some guys, talked about having been out making speeches for McLain and traveling around the state with McLain, then I said, "How do you pay for that?" And he was on the committee which heard most of McLain's legislation on behalf of the elderly.

Nathan: Well, of course!

Leary: Yes. And he said, "Oh, they pay me a stipend and pay my expenses, of course."

Nathan: He had no sense that there was anything questionable about that?

Leary: Oh, well, he was in the legislature. [imitating Evans' expression of his attitude] "What are you up there for? You've got to live!" And they were his people; he was interested in the elderly and the poor and the downtrodden and so forth.

So, when I speak about the Democrats of those days, I'm speaking about a bunch who came in as part of the poor...the people who put Olson's administration in. I don't suppose they were any hungrier--in the sense of legislators looking for the goodies of life a politician comes to expect--than any of the more respectable-appearing Republicans. But Olson did bring into California's legislature some people who came right out of the ranks of the poor. Tommy Maloney used to tell me some of them didn't have enough money to pay their way to Sacramento when they came up to take office.

Nathan: Did you happen to know Myrtle Williams?

Leary: Yes, sure, I knew Myrtle Williams.

Nathan: What did she do before her name got written into the Constitution?

Leary: She worked with McLain, and I have an impression that she had quite a bit of money. She was a widow.

Nathan: She had not actually been in state government?

Leary: No, no, no, no, no. She was in his organization. I think she got interested in a sort of benevolent way, maybe a Lady Bountiful kind of way, in his program. But he was an operator who I could see would be kind of fun to be with because he had things going. He had, you know, five or six different styles of getting the message out. And she was a good hard business head. She understood book-keeping and so forth, and I think worked with him purposely to try to keep this thing solvent and to figure out with him how to keep the money flowing in.

She was in some sort of real estate thing. They did develop some housing in, I think, Fresno. It was set up and run as non-profit, but I've always suspected there must have been some profit someplace along the line, because she worked quite a bit at developing that idea.

Leary: She did not appear on the scene a lot, but she would come up to the legislature once in a while. She didn't appear on the scene until this--oh, when his initiatives were out and things like that, she would be around; and he, sporting his big diamond rings. He had a marvelous sense of flair. I mean, he was the Willie Brown of those days with dress and style and so forth, a little overdone, but they didn't have as many people working to make men look tailored and great in those days.

I'm emphasizing it because the Democrats of that era were definitely the product of the Depression. And Bill Malone, who was county chairman for so long in San Francisco, told me repeatedly, when I would be exasperated at the quality of some of the Democratic candidates, that he simply could not get people to run.

I remember when Charlie Meyers ran. Charlie Meyers was the nephew of a political leader in San Francisco, a Democrat. I don't know whether he'd been a former sheriff or what, but somebody who had been a wheel. So, there were, I'm sure, all kinds of people taking care of Charlie by getting him this job.

But Malone said, "You don't know what it's like to try to get people to run for the legislature," particularly when it was \$100 a month, and the expense money was perhaps \$10 a day or something like that, maximum. They had one secretary; some of them shared a secretary. They had no staff at all. You went up there and were presented with all these bills and surrounded by lobbyists. And how many of them undertook to read them, and how many of them knew what they were doing, I don't know.

Cliff Berry was another from San Francisco. Cliff had a legitimacy a little bit more than just getting his name out there, in that he had been an active labor member and sort of was the AF of L - CIO, or the AF of L then, man on the delegation, along with Tommy Maloney, who was a Republican, and who had lots of experience under his belt there, but also lots of dedication to labor. He and Cliff Berry were kind of the labor people. And so, if I might put it this way, they were not as alone out there. They had backup in that they knew what labor wanted, they were close to labor's leadership in identifying program, and this kind of thing.

Brady was bright in a sort of pleasant way, and had a lot of friends, and got around town, and knew everybody, and this sort of thing. You never had any idea that he might have read the bill; somebody must have told him what was in the bill. But he was glib and was able to discuss it well, and he came from a good Irish Catholic family and had about eight or so kids, and everybody wanted to help him along.

Nathan: How do you account for your observation that the Republicans somehow were of a different level of ability?

Leary: Well, I think of Ray Williamson, who had been Republican leader in San Francisco and who was a legislator. He was in at about the same period of time that these others [were]. He was not an erudite man by any means. But he had a more substantial approach toward the problems that came before them and also a sense, I think, of linkage to a party, a sense of responsibility. He knew kind of what the party wanted. Nobody much knew what the Democratic party was, let alone what it wanted! I mean, it was Bill Malone, and it was Elinor Heller, who was national Democratic committeewoman at this time. And then along came this kind of maverick approach of the Club's Alan Cranston. And what was the--

Nathan: Yes. The California Democratic Club, that's true.

Leary: Yes.

Access, Postwar

Leary: Actually, after the war, I can remember, Gerry [Gerald] O'Gara became San Francisco state senator. He discussed at one time with me a feeling that a great many of the younger men coming back from the war had, that it was a closed operation, the Democratic party was, which suggests that it was sort of boss-run. And on a small and localized scale, it probably was. You sort of had to pass through the local county committee boss' hands. But access to party membership, access toward candidacy, was very difficult to get. I mean, you couldn't challenge an incumbent; you couldn't get inside.

Although O'Gara was far from aggressive in his own person and in his own political demeanor, he did say that a lot of young Democrats--they met and would talk then, having come back from the war--thought they were filled with dedication, they were going to make this country better because they'd been out there fighting for it, and they didn't know how to get hold of it, how to get in.

Maybe the post-Vietnam feeling in the same way is a little bit of what's done this tiny bit of opening up to local caucuses membership in the Democratic State Central Committee, which has just occurred in the last year.

Nathan: Oh, what is this?

Leary: Well, it's a formula whose details I'm not going to try to either recall or say, but a new formula would allow 45 percent of the members of the Democratic State Central Committee to be chosen by legislative district, by caucuses.

McLain's System##

Nathan: Well, I can't seem to let McLain go totally.

Leary: Oh, all right.

Nathan: I do also want to get back to the Democratic State Central Committee. But you were suggesting that maybe with all his flamboyance McLain was effective for his constituents?

Leary: Oh, he got bills through. He really did. And he had enough money coming in, this flow that he was able to generate and keep going with--in fact, I think that was one of the first times I ever saw the effective use of tapes, advance use of radio things. He would tape things and send them out all over the state. He was very sophisticated in a kind of boiler room operation. And by making these appeals; and having his own publication, a weekly newspaper; and having very sophisticated operations--they didn't have computers then, but a sophisticated way of keeping track of every name that drifted into their awareness, so that they could go back again to them; their letter solicitations--they had a very, very organized operation to keep the money flowing in.

What he did in the legislature was work diligently and show up at committees, represent bills, get bills introduced, testify on behalf of them, and get them through. I really credit him for doing a lot of things for the old people that would not have happened without him. I really think, for all of the blatant use of his money and his lobbying influence and so forth, he used his influence back in election times to support people who supported him in the legislature. For all of that, he was dedicated to the interests of this group that he knew how to milk, and he got something for them. I think they adored him, and I think he paid off to some extent for them. Of course, he got his measure through on the constitutional initiative, which was very funny.

I think it would be possible, though, to trace a number of things that he did. I think in housing, in strongly encouraging housing for the elderly, he was very vocal about it at a time when it wasn't particularly popular. But also he understood and worked

Leary: on tax problems that they had and on trying to get benefits for the over-sixty-five crowd. And he fought all the time to increase the pensions, which was an important, effective thing to do.

Nathan: Yes.

Representing the Constituency

Leary: Well, anyway, what I found fascinating was the sophistication of McLain's whole operation. Samish had a very sophisticated operation, but first, it was so privately held and secret and everything. But I'm not sure that it was this--it was so different in style. I mean, he [Samish] got reports in to him, and he knew what was going on all the time, but he did not keep this wide statewide relationship to a huge constituency. He had his constituency in the liquor business thing, and he knew how to manage that, and his relationship with other allied things--wine, and the groceries, retail stores. There was a liaison that he was able to keep somehow.

But this other operation which McLain had was a sort of prelude to a lot of the ways that people operate today, and the direct mail approach that he had, this sort of thing. So, that's one aspect of the lobbying there. But it links in with the legislators, you see, that I was talking about.

Nathan: It does.

Leary: And Johnnie Evans, who was a likeable sort of engaging person who had, like all of them, a great capacity for drinking, and was always in one peccadillo after another--he was always getting caught in some unseemly situation which gave somebody else control over him, so that he more or less had to operate the way people told him to. At least this is how it appeared from the best one could perceive. I always wanted to go with him in his district and see what his district was like, because he represented an area of the poor and the down-and-outers and the sort of rum bums, and I think he represented them fine. He knew what they were up against and knew where their interests lay, and that's where his votes went. Everybody was tolerant of a vote by which a legislator must take care of his constituency. You had to sort of do that, and then edge them into something else.

I noticed the other day a story about Maxine Waters, the present black assemblywoman from Los Angeles. I was thinking of her only because I saw this article in the California Journal which referred to a possibility, of who might run for Gus Hawkins' seat.

Leary: Gus Hawkins was another of the Democrats who came out of the Olson recession era. He is a very light black, and I can remember my astonishment when someone told me that he was black. I didn't know it. I found it marvelous that there was a black in the legislature and asked him for an interview. Have I told you this before?

Nathan: No, I haven't heard this.

Leary: I told him I wanted to write a story about him, and he was extremely embarrassed and asked me to reconsider. We went through the interview, because he wasn't going to be rude to a reporter, especially if there was a chance of getting a special story in about him. But after it some friends of his, other legislators, came and talked to me and said I should really consider seriously whether I wanted to make a point about his being a black, that he did not emphasize that and wasn't sure that he wanted his electorate to be aware of it, which is a long way around from today's cycle, isn't it?

Nathan: Very interesting, but very revealing too.

Leary: Yes. I think in that period--now, again, it would need an analysis of his district. He was a Democrat who voted very staunchly with conventional Democratic welfare type legislation, but curiously enough, as occurred with some of them, he was quite supportive of electric utilities when their legislation came around. And it was often interesting to see that the utilities had a great many supporters. Oh, their power was very strong, and it was the interesting dominant thing to discover, that and insurance companies and, of course, agriculture.

Nathan: Oh, yes.

Leary: The agricultural interests particularly in the senate. And in those years--

Nathan: Now, we're talking about the '40s and '50s?

Leary: Yes, immediately after '45, which is probably earlier than you want to be talking about. So, that's unfair.

Nathan: No. It leads into '48, which is where we are aiming.

Leary: Where you pick up, yes. All right. Oh, fine.

Nathan: So, we're close.

Leary: Well, I must also add the oil companies, of course, and Monroe Butler, who represented independent oil companies but primarily Bill Keck of Superior Oil, was a man with a great deal of influence

Leary: in that period. Independent oil was separate from big oil, Standard and so forth. And the independent oil companies seemed to have a lot of money to spend more freely than most in elections. They had great influence.

To go back a second, I mentioned the Republicans as being more substantial than the Democrats, and I was trying to reflect the genre of the run-of-the-mill Democrats. But I'm thinking really of the assembly. In the senate, where Democrats maybe were even fewer, they tended, of course, to be lawyers or to have more substance. There was a kind of a rag-tag crowd, especially from southern California and from the urban areas; if they were not rag-tag in San Francisco, they were at least curious.

Nathan: As you are thinking of the Republicans of the era, do you think of Thomas Caldecott? Was he active during those years?

Leary: Yes.

Nathan: He was a rather thoughtful person from the East Bay.

Leary: Yes, he was, and represents what I mean--of course, he was an attorney. Attorneys who were Republicans recognized that there was a long history of Republicans being named judges. I don't want to put crass objectives in their minds necessarily, but we're looking at a political situation. They saw this as a reasonable way to get ahead and to use their talents and to get known, and they were well known, and their friends urged them to run, and they knew that the likelihood was a judgeship off in the distance someplace, whereas the Democrats did not have so many lawyers and did not come out of that kind of a tradition.

Al Wollenberg, of course, was one of the outstanding ones. Another in the East Bay, whose father had been in the legislature before him, Arthur--

Nathan: Breed?

Leary: Yes, Arthur Breed, who came out of a substantial family here and with some money and some background and this kind of thing, was quite different.

Now, you did have a few Democrats. There was, in the senate, Jesse Mayo from Angels Camp, who was really a prince of a fellow, who understood agriculture that he had to get along with, and he understood the conservatives that he had to get along with, but basically was a Democrat and was interested in Democratic objectives--by that I mean in social issues and so forth--and was able to keep some independence.

Lobbyists and Clientele

Leary: Chris Jesperson in San Luis Obispo, who I think was in insurance, and who told me about the utility company--whether it was Southern Cal Edison or what in San Luis Obispo, or else perhaps PG&E. But he told me about being offered the insurance business for the utility, that he had done something or other in the local community that made his name well known, and people came to him and said, "Look we think your firm ought to be handling this. We're going to take it away from So-and-So, who's been handling it here. We want your firm to have it."

Nathan: How did he handle that?

Leary: He told me that he sat down with his partners, or whoever else was in the business with him, and said, "If we do that, I'm quitting and getting out of the business. We cannot take that business and have me be in the legislature, and I intend to stay in the legislature."

He told me about it when he was trying to illustrate the subtleties by which the special interests were able to win the fealty of members of the legislature, some of them not sharp enough to see it coming around the corner, or some of them hungry enough to say, "I've got to take that."

But he said that there were all kinds of legitimate, perfectly legitimate apparently, kinds of things--lawyers who would be asked to handle representation before state agencies on behalf of some special interest and who would say, "I won't handle it on anything that comes before my committee, but I will be glad to do it." And it was not so much the representation as it was becoming a client of a big lobbyist.

Much of the influence is done not in a dirty, open confrontation--"You've got to do this. Man, I've got you hooked," or "I won't give you a campaign contribution, and I'll see that somebody runs against you next time"--not that, but the amiable winning of friends. And if you reject some kind of a thing, then you don't get invited to the parties that the lobbyists are having, and you don't get all this kind of camaraderie, which was part of the game that they played.

There was a big joke in the California delegation. It would meet once in a while for dinner. Cleary, the San Francisco lobbyist, would take them to dinner. Al Wollenberg was always lining up with Tommy Maloney to tease Ed Gaffney, and when they

Leary: would sit down nudge him and say, "Ed, did you get one?" And he'd say, "What?" "Look under your plate. Did you--?" And they'd show that under their plate they had found \$25, you know, two tens and a five, and they would tip their plate up to show that the bills were still under there. They were going to get them out as soon as they could get them out surreptitiously. Ed would lift his plate, and there was nothing under it, you know, and they would kid him about it. But it was all a game which they were teasing him, of course, with.

It illustrated that at this level the idea of payoffs was joke stuff, you see, which they could tease about. And I think the San Francisco delegation on the whole--and Eddie Gaffney, I think, was far too much an innocent and far too virtuous to have taken anybody's money or anything like that, but he was kind of interested in seeing what was going on.

And, of course, I think Tommy Maloney saw that and disliked it and scorned it at the same time that he maintained a close friendship with Artie Samish. He was not a man who was bought, except maybe a little in the insurance business because he had a big busy insurance business. But everybody knew he spoke for labor and that's where he was. He was a man of integrity within his own world.

He was also interesting in that he did not drink and had a habit of taking a nap at the cocktail hour time, from 5:00 to 7:00, which made him available to rescue and steer around some of his compatriots who needed a little rescuing. About 11:00 or 12:00 at night, why, he would be driving them home. And he did it in a kind of conscientious way. He was puritanical in the way of Irish who know what drink can do and will not have it because they don't want that done, and trying to help out others. He was interesting.

What I'm giving, I guess, is just a kind of tone of how much both drinking and eating, and partying, and playing poker, and having fun with the boys was part of the whole thing. It was far less serious, the committee work, than now. And it was sort of understood that a lot of the very critical votes in committees were stage-managed before, that everybody knew how the whole thing was going to work out.

Nathan: Were these party arrangements?

Leary: No, no. I think lobby arrangements.

Nathan: There never was much party discipline?

Leary: No, no. Very, very rarely did you have a party caucus about something. Very rarely was there something which emerged as a party issue. Earl Warren, of course, contributed to that by wanting to keep his links with the Democrats and not wanting to insist on a partisan thing.

Laughlin Waters of Los Angeles, an attorney, was another of the capable, intelligent young Republicans at the time. I remember he carried a bill of Warren's, the first equal opportunity kind of bill. And when Warren went back to the Supreme Court, I wrote a story for Scripps-Howard, which I believe they did not take seriously enough to run, saying that I thought Warren on the Supreme Court might side with equal opportunity things for the blacks because he had sponsored this measure, which would have insured employment opportunities and also in housing, some kind of a housing thing, a modestly phrased thing, which would have banned denying housing on the basis of race.

Waters carried those bills. I personally never thought he carried them with conviction. I could be wrong. He may have simply known how the votes went and there was no point in making a big sweat of it. I thought he could have made a rather more dramatic issue of it than he did. They came up for votes and were defeated immediately in committee, and that's all. They were interesting in that Warren had taken positions on a race issue here in the legislature before he got on the Supreme Court.

I mention Laughlin Waters as one of those who was a lawyer, a Republican of some prestige and broad capability really, and one of the young members. He was sort of a pal of Caldecott's.

Now, among the lobbyists there were a number of very highly principled people, of course, and even, oddly enough, some of the lobbyists for special interests which had great influence, and used money a lot to support candidates, and they were able to get people in some sort of subservient relationship to them because it was so clear that they supported them. Even among those lobbyists there were a number of very fine men, really, and men of character.

Vince Kennedy, for the retail merchants, was an extremely decent man. [pauses to think] The name of Francis Carr comes to me, but Francis Carr was not a lobbyist. He was one of the first of the sort of professional staff people who came along.

Gas Tax and the Freeway System

Leary: In the '47 legislative session--and I think it's right, '47--the big fight was to raise the gas tax to get money for the freeway system. The whole issue was how far would the gas tax go, and I think Warren wanted a three-cent increase. The lobbyist for Standard Oil--Stephens, I think--who was an elegant kind of old guy who, I think I told you, used to sit whistling through committees--he'd sit in committee sessions and rock the knee that was crossed over his other knee constantly and whistle, a soft kind of shrill whistle, all through the legislative session. He must have been in his seventies, and he'd been around so long and was, as a representative of Standard Oil, so powerful that nobody dared question him. He had announced right at the beginning of the session that while the oil companies were absolutely opposed to any tax increase on oil, a position that I didn't fully understand because you would think that the more freeways there were--

Nathan: Of course.

Leary: But that they would accept one-and-a-half cents a gallon. And the whole legislature fought over this three-cent issue, and it would end up with one-and-a-half cents, as he had said that was what they would accept.

But when that work began, Randy Collier got an interim committee to study freeways, probably--could it have been from the '45 session to the '47, or maybe from the '47 to the '49? At any rate, it was the first time a committee had ever gotten \$100,000, that much money, and everybody went around writing stories about what was he going to do with all that money.

Nathan: Oh, he immediately was important.

Leary: Yes. Well, of course. He bought himself a lifetime career.

Nathan: Yes! The father of the freeways!

Leary: He then hired some experts, and he got Dick Zettel. Do you know that name?

Nathan: I do.

Leary: Whom I found exciting because he knew what he was talking about.

Nathan: He's at Cal now.

Leary: Where is he now?

Nathan: I think he's in the Institute for Transportation Studies.

Leary: Oh, here?

Nathan: At Berkeley.

Leary: At Berkeley. Yes. I wouldn't be a bit surprised that's where he wound up.

He had done, I guess, some graduate work or something like that. He was a very young man then. He began the analysis of where the burden would fall, and how much truckers would pay, and how many miles you could build for what, and this kind of thing.

George Hatfield had been, I guess during the war, on some kind of a committee, I guess maybe looking to postwar--well, everybody was concerned with postwar jobs and work and how do you do it. But something had led him across the country looking at other states and, I think, analyzing public works. I think essentially it was an analysis of what kinds of public works could you get into. He was immensely impressed by the road system of Iowa and came back convinced that somehow or other that was the thing they had to do, build roads. That was the first big thing; that was the top priority. And [this] was very influential.

I have a sense that Zettel may have come from Iowa, that they may have found that he had worked there. He [Hatfield] also found that the University of Iowa Department of Engineering, School of Engineering, had had a great influence on the development of the highway system there. And Hatfield came back convinced that they had to sort of go academic, that they had to get expert staff.

Some Business-Oriented Senators

Nathan: And was Hatfield a legislator?

Leary: George Hatfield was a very, very important senator from down in the Merced area, a power, who had run for lieutenant governor with Jimmy Rolph when Rolph, who was a Republican, lost through some mischance. (Some of this recall thing gets going, and we might as well go on with it more.)

Nathan: Oh, yes.

Leary: Hatfield was a man of immense power in the legislature and great strength. He had his own ranches down in the Merced area, and so he had wealth. Many men in the senate in that period were men of wealth.

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Nathan: You were saying, I think, that Hatfield had ranches and was well fixed financially.

Leary: Yes, very, and very independent. He was a man who so thoroughly understood the state and had been in the legislature for so long and had a power in it, was part of the Senate Finance Committee, and this was kind of a steering group. Hatfield was also a key member of the Senate Rules Committee, in which lodged the power of that house. They are the top leaders and run things, and he was always part of it.

Bill Rich from Marysville was another, a man out of agriculture, a very, very principled fine guy, staunch conservative, staunch Republican. But also Ben Hulse from San Diego, Jim McBride from Ventura, Nelson Dilworth from Hemet. One of the powerful men, of course, was Butch Powers from up near Susanville, who was pro tem. And another, probably the shrewdest politically, was Ralph Swing--I think his brother was the congressman who got Hoover Dam through. Swing was not quite part of the Hatfield, Rich, Hulse inner circle, I felt, though he was on committees--I guess on Rules--and acted with them. But there was a small sense of not quite being sure what Swing was up to. Not quite sure whose interests he was representing.

I mean to suggest that the old-timers who came to the senate out of agricultural districts knew a California political scene in which only Republicans mattered--either Old Guard Republicans or the Hiram Johnson upstart Progressive Republicans. But Democrats were non-entities, to most of them; fairly close to Socialists because they popped out in the time of great poverty, demanding State Relief and such. And Hatfield's attitude, like that of many others in senate leadership, was one of scorn, it appeared, for most Democrats.

He would accept somebody like Jesperson, who he knew to be a decent fine person, and Jesse Mayo, both of whom were intelligent men. McBride was a Democrat, but he didn't often vote as one. Hugh Burns was a Democrat from Fresno and he knew how to get along with the powers both among his colleagues and in the lobby. He was an affable, good natured, shrewd politician, trusted enough so that when the Un-American Activities Committee ran too wild under Tenney, the senate leadership put Burns in to keep it operating within bounds of propriety.

Leary: Jesperson was not a Democrat. He was a Republican, but a Progressive stripe Republican, siding with Warren and concerned about social issues. Hugh Donnelly was a Democrat but not an assertive enough person to be part of the top leadership.

The remarkable political change in the senate in those days was election of George Miller from Contra Costa, who followed Tony DeLap, another of the shrewd, capable Republican leader circle. Miller was a strong and politically adroit person who ultimately came to be accepted by senate leadership and was led into political savvy in that house largely by his friendship with George Hatfield. Hatfield recognized Miller as a symbol of the new generation coming along--and undertook to train him, which, of course, meant teaching him how to go along with the big interests in the state, except on those points where conscience or that curious structure, the Democratic party, mandated independence. Miller came in very aggressive, and I think Hatfield tutored him into more collegiality. He did ultimately become the inheritor of the mantle those old-timers wore.

But these were men of a quality that I think must relate to an era that's slipped away, men who took on the legislative role as a kind of responsibility from their community to represent their community interests, and they were sort of leaders in their own community. Of course, they enjoyed this clubbiness that they were in, and they enjoyed a relationship with the lobbyists which let them know what bankers wanted and what oil companies wanted and this kind of thing. I think they felt they had some personal independence anyway; they were not going to be financially dependent upon the lobbyists. And so they were able to weigh things a good deal.

Nathan: Did you feel at all that perhaps--I don't know if this is true or not--whether they would think that their interests would in some way coincide naturally?

Leary: Oh, yes. Definitely.

Nathan: So that there wasn't tension.

Leary: No. They felt, I believe, that the big businesses who were there--that part of their responsibility was to keep the economy of the state going and to see that things were conducive to a healthy economy for the business interests. How else were you going to run the state?

There might be times when there would be some occasional clash, but there would be little individual things that would come along. For instance, agriculture was not particularly interested really

Leary: in the problems of workmen's compensation. But they would be quite willing to recognize that a conservative and pro-business community wanted to fight labor on every kind of proposal to sweeten the benefits of workmen's compensation, which was one of the primary areas of fight all the time.

Nathan: Yes.

Leary: One of the areas that, for instance, Tommy Maloney would be carrying the bills on.

At a time before reapportionment in 1932 or '33 or '34--I guess it was '34 when the 1930 reapportionment finally got done. Prior to that, San Francisco had so many more legislators. The senate had been proportioned differently, so that San Francisco had quite a few senators, and Tommy Maloney had been one of the senators.

When he was reapportioned out of that seat, he then ran for the assembly and made it. He was called "Senator" most of the time up there, and he had great camaraderie with members of the senate, which often was helpful to San Francisco's program because they recognized that he had served with them. But in spite of this camaraderie, the senate generally united against labor and generally united against welfare, which was heavily tainted then with a Communist tinge and fear, from their point of view. And from the media point of view this was played heavily through that period, if you recall from things that you've seen then.

Nathan: Yes, I do.

Leary: The SRA in Olson's time, infiltrated heavily during his illness by radicals, was assumed to be Communist. And we had a number of some of the really dramatic demonstrations and picket lines of the pea-pickers and some of this kind of thing, where some of the almost armed battles over trying to organize agriculture labor were fought on the basis that it was Communist intrusion.

Now, many of the senate conservatives and some of the really estimable guys were, I think, pretty persuaded that there was an effort on the part of the Communist party to take over the United States by force and violence and that the Depression had shown some instances of this happening. Even though a man like Hatfield had a lot of balance, and a man like Rich had a great deal of balance--Rich was an attorney. I think the attorneys tended to weigh these alarms a little bit less hysterically. Hatfield was not an hysterical person, but he was a person who was very alarmed at the Populist movement that he saw sweeping California with all these erratic things like the Townsend movement, and the people that came in with Olson, and the SRA and WPAers, and this kind of

Leary: thing. They united people who were down-and-outers, and that was unhealthy because they could form a bloc together and try to get their way. Hatfield told me at one time he thought the greatest political mistake in the whole state was the initiative.

Nathan: Oh, that's interesting.

Leary: Yes. The passage of the initiative.

Nathan: The initiative as a tool?

Leary: Yes, for the public to assert its will over the will of obvious leaders from a community who understood economic interests, business interests, more widely than the electorate would. And he thought it would erode responsible government and that we would live to regret it very much. I can imagine what he'd say today!

Nathan: Yes. What an interesting insight.

Leary: Yes. But there was a Democrat in the senate whom I didn't mention, and that was Earl Desmond from Sacramento, who was quite as conservative as any of the rest of them and quite as, for instance, opposed to workmen's compensation and social security measures, and who argued with me solemnly at great length that childcare centers were a device concocted by the Communist party to destroy the American home, and that allowing married women to get out to work was a Socialist idea that was going to destroy the country, and so forth. And he fought against childcare center support vigorously.

In the senate, however, the big fights, the fight was looking toward wise development, and there were a lot of people who wanted freeway development--the truckers, of course, were one of the powerful influences in wanting freeways. The run between Los Angeles and San Francisco used to be one of the big dramatic truck runs, and if you could speed that up, why, it was going to be of immense value. Agriculture wanted roads. So, I think there was some conflict between agriculture and oil at this stage of the game.

And why the gas tax was so significant an issue at that time, I really don't know. It would be interesting to go back and find out why people fought so hard against it. But I think the concept of adding a tax on everybody who used an automobile at that stage was something that the legislators were afraid to have hung on them, and Warren wanted the building of a freeway system as one of his achievements.

Two Oil Lobbies

Leary: Oil in that era was divided, however, into two quite different lobbies. One was big oil, and the other one was independent oil. There was absolutely no question but that there was personal animosity and animosity over who had the power between them. Samish, I think, felt himself at enmity with oil and particularly with independent oil, because I think he saw Monroe Butler as a rival lobbyist who had a lot of money to spend and a lot of guys in his debt, who might be getting power--w-e-ell, might be getting enough power to seem to be threatening Samish.

I think that the big oil companies tried to stay above that fray. I think they felt confident enough about their ability to reach legislators and to sell their case and to muster power in the various communities of the state that they didn't have to fool around with who was going to be the big frog in the legislative lobby world, and they didn't want to sully themselves with a fight with Samish.

William Keck, I think, had the largest family-owned oil production in the whole United States, I believe, and had an immense amount of power because of this. His son Howard succeeded him.

Keck was one of these "I'm going to be Mr. Big" guys who was going to run the world his way. He was a strong forceful figure who'd come up the hard way. He'd probably started in the oil fields as just an ordinary worker; and got himself some land; and began to get some more; and became a tough, rough, mean son-of-a-gun who was going to have power. He was going to have political power where it mattered to protect himself.

Monroe Butler may have been a legislator before that. I'm not sure. It would be reasonable to think so. Many of the lobbyists, of course, were former legislators. The movie industry was represented by a man who was a former legislator and, in fact, had been the speaker for a brief little interlude. Ted Craig, I think, worked with the movie industry and with a good deal of the Hollywood crowd and Los Angeles assorted businesses and so forth. So, they came knowing the process and knowing how to use it and having friends. And, of course, this is still sort of a conventional way of building your career into something substantial.

Water Programs and Conflicts

Nathan: As you think about, let's say, the early '50s and the mid-'50s and so on, was agriculture pushing for the California Water Plan, or was there a good deal of conversation from southern California about the need for water?

Leary: Oh, heavens, yes, yes.

Nathan: All during this period?

Leary: Yes. But it was not--well, the development of a water program was one of the dominant pieces of legislation in maybe '47, '49 maybe, '50, '51.

Nathan: There was talk about the Central Valley Project, but this was federal, wasn't it?

Leary: Yes. First there was an effort to create a state approach toward water needs. There was a State Water Plan, a lot of it having to do with wells and with regulating of--I don't want to mislead you, because the wells thing gets a little bit different, into the pure water and so forth, and that led into something else.

But Oliver Carter, who was the senator from Redding, young and happy and charming and bubbly and delightful and a Democrat and, everybody sort of thought, the future governor of California, the future man who was going to be just great, who turned out to be somebody, apparently, who was not as decisive and strong and as leader-like as it looked at that time.

Nathan: He did become a judge later?

Leary: Well, his father was on the state supreme court, but Oliver Carter became a federal judge. It was Carter's court in which the kid-napped Hearstling case got tried first.

Nathan: Yes.

Leary: And he died shortly before the thing was all wound up.

Nathan: Well, that's interesting.

Leary: So, he went on the federal court. He was from a northern county; he was terribly interested in water law, which is sort of traditional from that community, partly from his family. The identity of Redding as a source of interest in the state water development goes back even further, which I'll touch on in a minute.

Leary: But one of the most dramatic interludes of legislating which I witnessed, and I thought it very exciting, was an effort to get through a state water plan; how much it actually looked to the development of what was then commonly called the Feather River Plan and to bring water into the Valley. It definitely was intended to bring water into the Central Valley. There was not much talk of it going into the Los Angeles area at that stage. It was thought of as a way of augmenting water in the agricultural area.

The senator from Fresno, Brad Crittendon, whose son then I think became the district attorney over there, was the man who spoke for the Valley, wanting water development without any controls and regulations. Carter, speaking for the north, wanted to impose regulations and was, as a Democrat, very sympathetic to the federal CVP approach. I would have to go back in the history of it to find out whether he really was fighting for something like the 160-acre limitation. But he was fighting for a control which would bar people making an awful lot of money on the state's turning water down there, whereas Brad Crittendon was arguing for a much looser designed bill. I did not at that time know an awful lot about the 160-acre situation and wasn't aware of all the nuances.

But let me go back to say the reason I identify Redding as a source of things. The [\$170 million] bonds were on the ballot which would have put up money to develop the state Central Valley Project, and money which ultimately, I think, has been used actually, something like \$33 million, a great huge sum then, to build a dam and to bring water down. The election must have been in 1933.

Nathan: Oh, and then the Depression came.

Leary: The Depression came, and they were not able to use the money. [interruption while MEL asks her husband to take a turkey out of the oven]

Nathan: So, the measure passed, but it was not actually--

Leary: But they could not sell the bonds. You couldn't possibly have sold the bonds. Enough work had been done towards the engineering design so that when FDR was looking for public works [in 1935], the first big public work that he authorized as a federal project was this all-ready-to-go--of course, he used federal money because they could get that--Shasta Dam Project.

The support and the prime advocacy for that early bond issue and the desire, the dream, that this was a way to do something to improve the agriculture in the area--one of the great advocates

Leary: of it was, oddly enough, the mayor of Redding, whose secretary became very active. She was a bright person who was, I believe, by that time maybe not mayor's secretary; she may have been director of the Chamber of Commerce of Redding, or something like that, a woman named Leone Baxter.

Nathan: Is that where she got started?

Leary: Yes. Leone Baxter moved out of Redding into her first campaign, and a campaign which Hatfield had a great deal to do with also and really got the start of his political statewide reputation because he went every place fighting for this. I mean, it was a ballot issue he was supporting.

I never really understood why the Redding people wanted this, unless they saw some economic advantage to them too. Maybe the recreation--they may have been wanting fish and game. Of course, they had flood problems, and so no doubt it was because of the flood damage. By joining their flood alarms with the agricultural needs of the Valley, they saw a common cause.

Leone Baxter came down and got involved in that, and she proved to be a brilliant strategist and a very fast worker and very politically able.

And meanwhile, Hatfield had hired for the statewide campaign, because he was very active in it, a newspaperman in Sacramento.

Nathan: You're not going to tell me this was Clem Whitaker?

Leary: It was Clem Whitaker. He ran the United Press Bureau in Sacramento, and he took a leave for three months allegedly--I mean, that was what he thought in the beginning--to run the campaign for that bond issue, and the two of them met. He never went back.

Now, in the meanwhile, influential interests whom they encountered then and learned about were, of course, oil and the utilities, primarily the utilities. And the utilities, with their desire to have all the water--hydro-power--they could, were heavily interested in the water program and in what happened with water development, and particularly the PG&E.

When Baxter and Whitaker teamed up to create the most powerful and effective campaign management concern in the West and at this period--the Knight period and earlier Warren's--maybe the most effective in the country, they became so aligned with utility interests (and, of course, openly supported by them) that they fought against public power, as Shasta was developed by the federal government. I think in the original advocacy of a state water plan

Leary: by agricultural interests there never was any idea they would get caught in the federal reclamation law limitations. When that happened, as the Roosevelt administration took on Shasta Dam, it became one of the most important political issues of the state and still is. Whitaker-Baxter worked industriously to try to keep the federal government away from low-cost subsidized--you know, as they would constantly say, "public power"--and did fight and thwart a lot of it. They sort of wound up supporting and getting the United States Army Engineers in to do some of the various Interior Department dams; their circumvention of the 160-acre limitations courts have held, of course, improper, but nevertheless went forward.

Many of these interests which began in the early 1930s about water programs are still fighting, and they're still involving agriculture and dam controls and the utilities and so forth.

New Campaign Styles

Leary: But Leone and Clem were both very bright, they were quick-minded, and they knew how to use gimmicks and advertising slogan type things. It's come to be the style to parody them because they went into such sort of vulgar excesses, like, "Don't be a pig on the highway," or something, and then picturing an ugly old pig. Well, they got away with it in those days, because it was a new tactic, and people were not used to fights of that kind over initiatives.

But, anyway, out of the interests that met at the legislature, and were involved in agricultural water interests, evolved some of the modern political style of campaigning and of persuasion. An awful lot of the use of the initiative, of course, got very deftly handled by the two of them.

They also had very sophisticated kinds of approaches toward the media. They were very persuaded that it was important to get to the metropolitan media, yes, but the big thing was to get into the rural press. And they developed and distributed a Clip Sheet.

Nathan: Yes, I saw them in your files at The Bancroft Library. I saw the Clip Sheets.

Leary: Yes, I used to keep them a lot, because they were marvelous insights into what the interests wanted at that time. You could just look down it and see exactly what the utilities wanted and what the railroads wanted, and you could tell when Whitaker-Baxter got a new client, because they would use this little chatty column that they

Leary: had in it to start talking about something new. And you could just spot--[recalling her thinking upon reading the column] "Well, they haven't talked about that for a long time. Maybe somebody else has hired them. Obviously they've gotten themselves somebody new." You could watch that and see emerging a campaign towards something that they might be telegraphing six months in advance.

Nathan: Yes, and it was signed just by Clem Whitaker, or the ones were that I saw in your file.

Leary: Yes, signed by Clem, but I think many were written by Jim Dorais on their staff, a sweet, unassuming, very able person who worked with them for years. He's retired now. Has a place up near Auburn, I think. They had maybe three or four people on their staff. It was a continuous year-round operation, even though they specialized in campaigns. But with their Clip Sheet they salted opinion all through the small newspapers--and got read by and so influenced editorial writers on the big papers as well. I remember once when they were most active on behalf of the Medical Association, opposing Warren's health insurance plan, they had been so successful in getting blasts against it into the rural press that Collier's Magazine did a big double-truck spread to show how unsympathetic the rural press of California was to the idea, and every one of the articles they displayed, mostly editorials, was either a direct steal from the Whitaker-Baxter material or a rewrite of it. They did not participate in lobbying at the legislature, but they were able to see that getting ideas conveyed to the media was a powerful political assist.

Legislative Investigation Committee##

[Interview 4: June 15, 1979]

Leary: We had been talking about the legislature before.

Nathan: Right.

Leary: I can't remember exactly where we were, but we just now happened to be kind of plunging into a slightly different approach to the legislature.

Nathan: Yes. An investigation.

Leary: At some time somebody may want to look into the investigation, and I can't even remember the year, but it was Dolwig's freshman year--I think it was 1947, when he was assemblyman from San Mateo County,

Leary: and his first session up there. A big flap developed about a bill. My recollection is that quite out of the blue one day, George Collins rose on the floor and raised objections to a bill, which stunned everybody. But George Collins had this terribly odd habit of actually reading them and sort of snooping around and finding out what was behind something when it looked unexpected. He questioned whether there had been a special interest involved with one of his colleagues in introducing this bill.

My recollection is that maybe the bill had been authored by Randal Dickey, or maybe by Charlie Lyons (Speaker) or Sam Collins, and that it had to do with extending peace officer status to a very small group of some kind of guards that were not presently covered. I can't remember. Could it have been people related to the liquor enforcement? I'm not sure, but some small cluster. On its face, it would look very innocuous, but--

Nathan: Were there benefits to them?

Leary: There would have been great benefits to them. They would have been allowed to carry guns, they would have been allowed to come under some kind of retirement, and this kind of thing.

It didn't apply to more than maybe half a dozen people, I think, in the state. But for some reason which does escape me now but would appear, I'm sure, in the stories of that period, that appeared to have been something which Charlie Lyons very much wanted. It led to all kinds of suggestions of a special interest involvement, of somebody--whether there was a payoff or what.

In the midst of this, as the investigation was on and the inquiry was being pursued about the questions raised on this bill, somebody claimed to have overheard very revealing remarks in the men's room at the back of the assembly chamber. I remember that was very dramatically introduced, suddenly, into the evidence that was being taken.

What was sort of interesting about it was that as this flap was raised over whether there was some devious purpose behind this bill, and was there something that was wrong about it, the legislature ordered an investigation into the charges.

Nathan: Was this a very unusual kind of thing?

Leary: Yes, very unusual. They rarely did things like this, so clearly the suggestion charged by George Collins at the time, if it was not direct and specific, raised so many questions, and the press

Leary: immediately picked it up and began furthering those questions so much that they felt they had to deal openly with it. I mean, everybody began to feel this. So, an investigative body was named, which Dolwig was named to head.

Nathan: It was a legislative committee?

Leary: It was a legislative committee. They were going to look into it themselves and clean it up for themselves and find out. My guess is that they had subpoena powers, so that maybe--was it a subcommittee of a standing committee?--or something like that.

They did do a lot of investigating and had a big show of a hearing. But I think what seemed significant at the time was that Dolwig, who was a lawyer-like person, and rather precise and careful and objective in his demeanor and in the measures that he handled, and who seemed to have some independence, and who came from San Mateo--clearly had a good head on his shoulders. Once he became the chairman of this investigatory group, though, a lot among the news reporters began to feel that that was a clear indication that he was aligned with the Samish forces, because Charlie Lyons was involved in this thing, and it was always obvious that Lyons had Samish's backing and that Lyons was a sort of a tool of his.

And Dolwig later on was convicted, having been very active in the pursuit of the Southern Crossing and in studies looking toward the Southern Crossing, and having gotten close to the State Highway Commission and State Highway Department in that study.

The Southern Crossing, a second bridge across the Bay, was very much desired generally by a lot of people in San Francisco. San Franciscans wanted it because they felt it would deflect traffic away from them, and they were glad to have traffic go someplace else. San Mateo wanted it because they felt that it would be a healthy business tie for them with the East Bay.

But I think that became the area where Dolwig initially got very close to Highway Department things, and this led him into having a lot of private practice having to do with property that was the Highway Department's to dispose of, and, I think, led ultimately to his undoing, or was a share of what his undoing was.

V FOCUS ON URBAN AND REGIONAL PROBLEMS

Leary: From '53 on, I was not covering politics because, having had a little girl in '52 and six months off and then coming back to work in '53, I did not want to go back, and I think the paper felt that they had interrupted my career as a political reporter. I was very happy not to go back as a political reporter.

City Planning and Public Housing

Leary: I was then doing urban affairs things and city problems. There was a great interest--that was the time that Jane Jacobs was writing about city planning.

Nathan: Yes!

Leary: And Jack Kent at the University of California someplace along the line there had a tour of duty as city planner for San Francisco.

Nathan: Yes.

Leary: Which I think was a little disillusioning to him.

But the great concern about what's happening to cities, and the interest in not only beautification, but neighborhoods coming together and finding some kind of way of getting political action out of little local groups of citizens, seemed to me a new and exciting political evolution. I still think that's going on. I think that's still a very significant movement.

It was affected by the federal government's community programs, which fostered minority leadership and so forth. But it was discernible then that something different was happening to cities, with minority groups coming together and ethnic groups of one kind or another.

Leary: That was a little bit before SPUR was founded, the San Francisco Planning and Urban Renewal Association. But there had been a prior and very important group, a private agency, San Francisco Planning and Housing Association, which had been founded by some women, Alice Griffith one of them.

Nathan: Oh, yes.

Leary: It was a very exciting factor in the development of planning in a modern phase, in San Francisco anyway. I don't know whether I talked about Alice Griffith and public housing. I think I did talk a little bit about my interest in public housing before.

Nathan: Right. But we didn't really get into it. Even the Southern Crossing, do you think, may have run into difficulty because of the new awareness that you're describing, about what happens to communities, and the concerns about the ecology of the Bay? Or is that too big a jump?

Leary: Ecology of the Bay was not involved at that time, no. And I guess I have forgotten some of the details of what really killed the Southern Crossing. But a lot of the question was whether or not we are going to make the present bridge, the Bay Bridge, pay off. And there was a great deal of doubt and, I think, pressure from bondholders against a Southern Crossing lest there not be enough traffic on the Bay Bridge to pay the bonds back.

Nathan: Oh, that's interesting. Now, again, I was interested in your speaking of Alice Griffith and public housing. Was Catherine Bauer Wurster part of this group?

Leary: Yes, but later. I mean, she came in. In fact, I interviewed her the first day she arrived in San Francisco.

Nathan: Did you?

Leary: So, prior to getting into political reporting, I got very interested in the housing possibilities and public housing. Part of it was because it was one of the things I found I could write while I was still doing this stupid "secretary-to-the-city editor" routine. Nobody else was writing it, and the federal government was considering public housing under FDR.

And so I, on weekends, in order to help myself know the city better as a potential reporter, went around and tried to say, "If we had public housing in San Francisco, where would it be, where would be the logical places for it, and would the communities accept it?" So, I did a lot of neighborhood interviewing, and I did it on weekends on my own time. Of course, [wryly] the

Leary: Newspaper Guild today would violently disapprove of that. I wrote stories, so that really the first big stories I wrote were on the hypothetical situation: If San Francisco has public housing, what is the community response to it? I had a lot of fun doing it because it was a place where I could, for the first time, move in as a reporter and go and talk to people for the paper.

It did bring me, though, into very active awareness as public housing programs developed, and I encountered Alice Griffith, for whom I really had immense respect. I hope there are lots of things on file about her. She was the daughter of one of the first people who began a major tugboat operation in San Francisco. She died at about eighty-eight or eighty-six or eighty-nine, something like that, in maybe the mid-'60s. So, her childhood goes way back.

She grew up--she told me that her home was on Rincon Hill, now an industrial sector near an on-ramp to the Bay Bridge, but then a neighborhood of lovely homes. As she grew up in San Francisco, she became caught up in the attitude that was just emerging in Chicago and the eastern cities in a lot of women, concern about social welfare work and so forth, which she, I think, directed largely through the Episcopal Church, which she was active in.

She helped found at that time what I think is still operating, the Telegraph Hill Nursery, or Settlement House it may have been called then, because this was part of the Settlement House movement. It is now called the Telegraph Hill Neighborhood Center, down off of Columbus Avenue a couple of blocks, on Lombard Street, in the North Beach area. They set it up as a place to try to teach mothers how to take care of babies and to weigh babies, and the mothers would bring the babies in to have their health checked. It was a well-baby kind of thing, and it continues that right now, with a clinic--and I think she continued to work at it into her eighties.

Nathan: Was it primarily for immigrant families?

Leary: Initially for immigrants, and then, of course, a lot of Italian immigrants. What the immigrants were initially, I don't know. Maybe Irish initially, and Chinese now.

Nathan: In San Francisco.

Leary: Yes. To teach people minimum health standards in their homes, to teach them how to keep their houses clean, and the importance of it, and some nutritional things--that sort of deal. It was the sort of spontaneous thing that women who had a do-good approach toward life were doing across the country, and the fever was spreading in the Settlement House movement.

Civic-Minded Women

Leary: Then the 1906 earthquake came along, and she, with her kind of sensitivity about what was going on in the city, a young woman then, went around and watched the rebuilding occurring and was horrified to see that they were cramming houses right up against the property lines, that they were putting very few windows in. She took a notebook, a pencil, and a tape measure and went around and measured lot sizes, measured housing sizes, and measured window sizes in relation to rooms.

I'm sure the builders were pretty outraged at her intrusions, but she was able to get away with it and went up to the Board of Supervisors and got them to enact the first regulations--I believe the first in the city, but anyway the first after the earthquake--which began to mandate how many square inches of window per room size and this kind of thing, and to require at least some portion of the lot be left for open air.

From that, she got interested in housing, of course--I mean, the whole future of the social factors in housing--and became a force from then on concerned about housing conditions, fighting for better zoning and tighter zoning and this kind of thing, and well known at City Hall about it.

She came, as I've indicated, from a family with a good deal of wealth. She had a home up on Pacific Avenue. And she managed, both by her influence because of the people that she knew socially, plus her persistence, to keep attacking and fighting on housing issues, and then helped found with Elizabeth Ashe this private group, the San Francisco Planning and Housing Association. They were great forces in the community who actively sought public housing for San Francisco then. I mean, they were right there ready to go on it. One of the women who came onto the Housing Authority after Alice Griffith was Julia Porter. I think she also came into this interest via the Planning and Housing Association.

My impression is that this collection of women, with great interest in the physical development of San Francisco--the adequacy of its housing for the poor and its transportation needs and such--and central to this interest, concern for social problems that emerged in urban life, they differed from some other clusters of well-meaning and concerned women, in San Francisco. I think they were intent on facts, on economic data. They were not off--as social workers were--on individual case history concerns. They were social economists. They looked to the large life of the city and tried to keep the human value important, but they understood the city's economy. I am making this distinction from other groups

Leary: of women active early in this century who focused on public morals. For instance, there was the Dance Hall Commission, which in World War I supervised the public dance halls, and was very concerned about, "No drinking, no smoking, no vile conduct and evils. Our girls might dance with our soldiers, yes, but we must--."

I think ultimately a lot of the League of Women Voters leadership came out of the Dance Hall Commission. Part of the history of that group I got from Caroline Charles.

Nathan: Oh, really?

Leary: Yes, who, I think, knew a good deal about that group. Now, Caroline Charles, I think, ultimately became interested in the Planning and Housing Association too.

Nathan: Also having gone through the League of Women Voters experience.

Leary: Yes.

Nathan: Was Emma McLaughlin involved in the Dance Hall group?

Leary: I think so, yes.

Nathan: But these were really two different concerns?

Leary: Yes. They may have overlapped, you know, and given each other support, but it was kind of interesting because they were different areas in which people got interested.

The housing approach got more and more sophisticated and more sort of professionalized, and when Catherine Bauer came out that injected a more professional approach to it. I believe she came out as a consultant to advise about planning and housing for the city. She was an extremely impressive, strong-minded, forceful person from the beginning. I was greatly taken with her, right away, and thought how fortunate San Francisco was to have her here. I had no idea then that her life would become so much a part of this area.

The whole thing about city planning--my recollection is that the Junior Chamber of Commerce, a lot of young guys, did some study about the city's future and recommended that we ought to have a city planner, and that seemed awfully esoteric. Was it Paul Opperman who became the first city planner?

Nathan: Yes, in 1949.

Leary: And there was a tendency to partly suspect that this was probably a Communist plot, that we were going to have people telling us--

Nathan: Invading private property rights?

Leary: Yes. You're going to plan, tell people what they can and cannot build, and where, and so forth. And also to think that it was a dreamer thing, that this was just a lot of fancy poetical people approaching the tough problems of real estate.

"City of the Future"

Leary: There were very exciting people, to me as a reporter, involved in this and looking at the shape of the city in the future. I remember Paul Opperman, the city planner, talking about the potential development when what is now the Golden Gateway would be developed, down around the Ferry Building and so forth. He envisioned walkways at maybe third-floor levels, and multiple different restaurants at different levels, and open-air places, and so forth, which was so fanciful. I wrote great stories about it, and I thought, "This guy is just smoking. It is not possible that you'd do that." And here I look at it, and it's happened exactly as he visualized it.

Nathan: Yes. You mentioned that you had interviewed Catherine Bauer, and I hope you might say something about that when you want to.

Leary: I don't remember what I wrote about her, but I made the effort purposely to be the first reporter to meet her and write about her, because I was close enough to housing matters to know in advance. It would be a scoop if I could get to her first. She was coming in as an official city consultant on planning, as I remember it. In the media approach today there would have been a press conference set up to introduce her. In those days reporters used more of their own enterprise, I think--or maybe had time to--to get news first, not just sit with everybody else at a press conference.

So, I remember meeting her and doing an interview with her about what city planning was and what she thought the opportunities were. Of course, she didn't know anything about San Francisco yet; she'd just arrived. I kept a close contact with her then and kept a friendship with her, saw her later at Harvard when she was back at the same time that I was, knew her when her husband was just courting her.

Leary: I had the reporter's usual problem of liking them (the city planners), and being very drawn to them, and finding them marvelous story sources for me because I could write at great length about things that were going on in city planning, but then worrying about whether I was getting too close to them, and wanting to stay objective, you know, and not become propagandist for them. So, I used to be anxious about that, but I did many, many stories of this look into the future, and then had the chance to go and look at other cities across the country.

I am mixing up time sequences here because obviously the start of public housing before World War II and my interest at that time differed from the formal start of planning in San Francisco postwar. I am sure all the newspapers were carrying a great many stories about the changing urban scene. It was of immense interest in the immediate postwar years--what was happening to San Francisco. George Johns, who was local secretary of the Central Labor Council, was on the school board, a quite thoughtful and influential person, and he was terribly concerned about the diminishing industrial base in the city; where would jobs come from, for the future? San Francisco as a clothing center, as a design center--those ideas were just emerging, and making news. But the News got into its crusading stance about the waterfront, especially, and the potential for an improved downtown if the produce market area north of Market Street from Front Street down to the Embarcadero could be used for buildings.

A lot of this came into focus with Ed Keil, San Francisco attorney, who knew a lot about real estate and I think owned a lot with his brother. I think he told me somebody in his family, maybe his grandmother, was a midwife early in San Francisco and used to get paid for her services with bits of property and that's how the family fortune started. Anyway, Ed Keil had been to Boston on some business and came back to tell Art Caylor how they had wiped out some old slums along the waterfront and replaced them with a thriving business center and some park waterfront that was beautiful and he suggested why not do that with the current produce area and make the Ferry Building a central point for a beautifully developed new area. It turned out that some of the very first plans ever done for San Francisco contemplated a park-like development with walks and such along the waterfront.

Well, after Caylor wrote about Ed Keil's suggestion, the editor, Clarvoe, told me to go ahead with what I might develop out of the idea and we really had fun enlarging on this to attract public interest. I remember we took photographs of the towers out at Stonestown and dubbed them into an air shot of downtown San Francisco as the first vision of what might be possible in the Golden Gateway. And we got the various groups such as Planning and Housing into supporting the Ferry Park concept.

Leary: Later, two or three years later, tied in with our interest in rapid transit and such, I made the trip to look at other cities. But first we were busy stirring public interest in the possibility of downtown urban renewal. The photograph didn't look very inviting, so we had artist's sketches done of what San Francisco might look like with great, big, tall buildings down there, and we ran it huge on page one, "the City of the Future," and this kind of thing, and wanted very much to have a parkway around the Ferry Building.

Nathan: Oh, yes, there were big plans; there was going to be a big sort of shipping center.

Leary: Yes. A central place for passenger ships to come in and disembark.

Nathan: Some beautiful plans, some marvelous plans.

Leary: Yes, some great plans. Vernon De Mars was one of those who was, I believe, hired by the San Francisco Planning and Housing Association to do a big concept of what might be done. And I know he compared it to the Tivoli Gardens in Copenhagen, what the possibility down there would be for a park.

Jerd Sullivan, of Crocker Bank, was active with the Planning and Housing Association and he encouraged this search for the "future" and was influential in getting business stirred up. I remember about this time the News decided not to be so possessive we'd keep the other papers away, so we helped set up a press conference at which Vernon deMars would tell his Ferry Park plans, then waited to see if the other papers would respond, and they did. We were pleased as punch because by this means an idea we had launched became a generally accepted, citywide project. As we got into thinking about the potential for the Embarcadero, we encountered plans others were making.

Pansy Planters v. Elevated Freeways

Leary: Meanwhile, of course, along came the State Highway Department with an elevated freeway along the edge, and that became a very big fight in the city; the News fought against that and delayed it at least for a year and maybe longer--a year and a half, I think--while we editorially and with stories and all kinds of things tried to stop it. We had run into the Highway Department's freeway plan--not knowing of it in advance--while urging the park there. People began doing drawings of how the park would look with the freeway elevated over it, draping ivy over it and such. And one

Leary: strong faction urged putting it underground and that got into problems of tubes running through water--of course, the BART plans for the same idea, tubes under water, were going forward, but people in San Francisco were horrified at the idea of an underground route. There was just an awful controversy over whether the freeway was needed or not. And meanwhile support for and interest in BART was growing.

One amusing thing was newspaper rivalry in all this. The Examiner, as I recall, was generally very sceptical about BART and never shared enthusiasm for it. The Chronicle was mildly favorable--not out developing stories all the time. Both, I think, felt San Francisco didn't get enough out of BART, whereas I thought the regional flow of people would inevitably help build San Francisco into a greater center. But the fight over that freeway didn't elicit any support from the other papers; in fact, they derided the idea.

I remember a very unorthodox effort to enlist Chronicle support. I went down with Vernon De Mars to the Chronicle one night to talk with Scott Newhall to ask, wouldn't they come out against building the Embarcadero Freeway. He said immediately that he agreed. In fact, he went to a pile of papers on top of a file or tucked behind a file, brought out an envelope of photographs he said he'd had shot, of the Seattle waterfront, which has an elevated freeway. He showed them to us as an example of just terrible environmental disaster--the freeway cutting off the waterfront from the city, up against industrial buildings, everything utterly bleak. And he said he agreed in fearing that future for San Francisco.

So then I asked if they wouldn't pick up the campaign with the News. He said he doubted they could. And they never did. They never ran those Seattle pictures nor gave us one bit of help. Recently, in his occasional pieces in the Chronicle, he made some references to his battle against the Embarcadero Freeway. It ran when I was out of town and didn't know until weeks later. But it was not at all the fact. They never opposed the freeway. We did with enough effectiveness to at least delay it and, I think, stir up the attitude that ultimately refused to have that freeway linked to the Golden Gate Bridge as the highway planners initially wanted to do--tunneling under Russian Hill and skirting the waterfront of the Marina. It would have been beautiful!

Well, the State Highway Department was outraged at us and referred to us as "pansy planters" who wanted to go down and have a little garden down there instead of having this [wryly] marvelous movement of traffic conveyed through these beautiful elevated freeways.

Leary: I kind of liked the highway engineers; even though I was writing against them, I found them kind of interesting. But that became one of the great fights that it was fun to be part of.

Nathan: Did you interview people in the Highway Department?

Leary: Oh, sure. And went to Highway Commission meetings, and would write about what their plans were. They would be willing to talk about them; they felt the obligation as public agents to explain what they were trying to do.

They were particularly outraged because when they first aired their initial plans for the Embarcadero Freeway, crossing in front of the Ferry Building, nobody came to the hearing. But I have never been certain but that perhaps they didn't want anyone to attend that formal announcement of their intention; maybe they kept a low profile. The state was erupting with all kinds of disputes over freeway plans cutting through communities and they'd been in so many San Francisco fights they could hardly have welcomed another. But they were indignant that they had sent notices of their first meeting and nobody came. I can understand the irritation at that; they had provided a forum, and nobody attended. We picked up the interest later, because it grew out of this concern about the possibility of the Golden Gateway, of a big set of highrise apartments and office buildings and so forth, on land which was full of one-story or two-story produce markets then.

It was much talked about as a tax resource. There was a great deal of talk about this bringing money into San Francisco. Nobody ever thought about it also costing more, you know, and obligating the city to more expensive facilities, or at least I didn't think about it. I just thought this was going to be a great bonanza.

And parallel with that was the interest in the subway, in BART. That began--and I believe that I've talked about BART before in a previous interview.

Nathan: Not too much. I think there may be more to say, if you're so inclined.

Leary: That was part of this whole sense of the changing city; I mean, as BART was talked about. It was postwar--you know, we got by through the '50s, the end of the '40s and into the '50s, without the terrible depression people were afraid of as a repetition of post-World War I. We got by fairly well, and all of a sudden growth was just happening all over California, so that you began to feel this new era coming, and it was obvious that the city was at a point of great change in its life.

Nathan: Did you have any feeling that there was leadership from Sacramento in dealing with these matters, or was the impetus coming from the localities?

Leary: In San Francisco, the impetus was from the locality. I have felt that Los Angeles never was able to muster the same kind of uniform local support that San Francisco did.

The legislation authorizing a study for regional rapid transit in the Bay Area and designating at first a small amount of state money for it came along--I think O'Gara was the senator then who carried the measure. That had its very first groundwork done at Sacramento, but I never felt that there was particular interest in it or support for it. And probably the Highway Department was dubious about it as a competition for the gas tax funds.

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Leary: In fact, Senator Collier purposely opposed rapid transit for this very reason and balked at every step which might commit the state to help. So, on transit, no state help at all. The big interest was in freeways. San Francisco trying to stop freeways was considered eccentric and stupid. There had been great state plans about how to cope with a recession after the war, and Warren had a commission headed by Alexander Heron at work on this. But it found employment not becoming a problem, but coping with the great influx of people was, so it got into educational plans, to be sure there were enough schools, and some other aspects of adjustment to growth. But no, one did not have a sense of state involvement in growth. Later when Pat Brown focused on the University development he was carrying forward the basic idea of the Heron commission--that the root on which California's economy should be established was an educated people. The tremendous backing for education both at the elementary and later university level was seen as a specific source of economic advantage.

Understanding Change and Growth

Leary: But the ferment of the '50s was urban change and that took special focus in San Francisco, or in the whole Bay Area, as populations changed, the blacks who had come for war work stayed and brought more; housing began spreading like mad in the suburbs.

I don't recall the date when I made a tour of eastern cities to discover what else was going on parallel to San Francisco's change, but that was very helpful in reporting the local scene. For I

Leary: discovered for myself what I'd been reading about as a nationwide phenomenon: the awareness that cities should be beautiful--I remember a woman in Baltimore who'd led a window-box crusade, to get flowers out on the drab streetfronts. I found planning committees and urban design enthusiasts all over. And talked with a lot of rapid transit people, in Boston, Chicago, New York. And went to Toronto to see the first modern rapid transit system built on this continent. I knew its director, because he'd come out as a consultant to the BART planning, and got a great tour. He took me to a high building to show clusters of highrise apartments or office buildings dotted across the city--they had risen around every rapid transit station.

But what also interested me was discovering, besides the physical change taking place which compared with San Francisco's struggles, the emergence of neighborhood coalitions seeking social change. I remember talking with a minister in Pittsburgh and someone else in Philadelphia--and finding the demand for a voice in their own neighborhood direction coming from blacks. So I got some of that written: the social changes.

I have been trying to think how this ferment of change and growth affected the state capitol and the Knight administration. It seems to me in the great expansion of industry taking place in the Los Angeles area that labor was trying to organize down there, and the automobile workers, the Retail Clerks Union, the Teamsters all were enlarging their membership in southern California and if not breaking the old resistance to labor at least denting it a little. The Daily News down there, under Manchester Boddy, the end to crossfiling, establishment of the CDC and the zest with which a new generation of young people was entering into politics, after the war, all stimulated those who wanted a Democratic party to take shape. Perhaps the vitality in this area brought the Times to think, by 1958, it had better make a determined effort to bring in "right-to-work" legislation: because they saw changes occurring which diminished their command.

Someplace I ought to mention that Knight had gotten himself so well positioned for the governorship by all the speechmaking he did. It is interesting to see that Reagan followed this same successful pattern--he had moved from moviemaking into professional dinner-speeches and had down pat the art of touching lightly and amusingly on serious subjects. Knight was different; for one thing, he did not woo the right wing. He was wooing, if anything, Democrats. But he was simply adored as a public speaker for all the groups you can think of--Kiwanis on to any local festival or bankers or what you will. He was amusing--where Reagan stirs a sense of indignation, Knight awoke a sense of good-fellowship, and he was quite funny and

Leary: likely to use himself as the butt of a joke in an attractive way; but he was always able to throw in the necessary reference to issues of the day to indicate he was on top of public affairs. But this speechmaking all over built his popularity; he didn't have a central message, but his presence as lieutenant governor kept people feeling they were in touch with the state capitol. Warren tended to be solemn and serious and did the major events, of course, but I think he encouraged Goodie to take on all the pleasant trivia. But I don't suppose anybody entered the governor's office as well known right off as Knight. Well, no, maybe Rolph was. He was like Jimmie Rolph a good bit. Another constant speech-maker.

But as I look back the effort to commit the state to freeway development, linking north and south; the great burst of state construction, with new state buildings closer and more speedily popping up in every community (a great controversy in Sacramento as old-timers wondered why the state had to have so many buildings); the growing concern for a state water development that would benefit the Central California Valley and southern California--all these, of course, were other symptoms of the growth occurring and I guess the major themes Pat Brown picked up on, the water plan and the University development especially, had been emerging as priorities in Knight's time--showed themselves, in fact, in Warren's. It seems to me there was a growing concern, too, in this Knight-Brown era about park development, egged on by some of the earliest park and redwood enthusiasts. (Was Colby still alive? Not sure. But Newton Drury was active.) Somewhere in here was seeded the environmental movement--or rather, not really started but cultivated from the earlier days that began park development.

City Housing in World War II

Leary: I mentioned that housing was one of my first interests as a reporter, and my getting into reporting initially in writing about the Roosevelt plans for public housing. During the war the problem of housing need, especially for the poor, became very evident.

I can remember one time asking Tom Brooks, who was then San Francisco's chief administrative officer, to go with me because he'd never seen vividly what was going on in the war in the way of housing, and the Health Department was under his authority. I took him to some places which I had discovered where, for instance, people were renting out a bathtub as a bed in a house

Leary: which had been converted to care for about eighteen people sleeping there. They were renting beds by the hour, so that you would get it for one eight-hour shift, and then when you had left somebody else rented that same bed for the next eight hours. And there would be rooms in which they did at least try to curtain one bed from another bed. They rigged ropes and put a sheet over them, and that was the privacy that you had when you rented space here.

And those guys were war workers and so forth, many of them the blacks who were coming into town, much of this going on in the area right behind City Hall. I remember finding, to my horror, that in some of these areas beyond Van Ness Avenue which had not been burned down there would be on one whole side of a block one toilet, and that an outside toilet under a stairway. It was an old-fashioned, sit-on-the-hole kind of a thing such as you'd find in a farm area, and that was right here in San Francisco, and that was during the war.

So, I became very aware of the scandalous housing conditions at that time and was very interested in housing and in the possibility of public housing remedying some of these.

Nathan: How did Brooks respond when he saw this?

Leary: Shocked, very shocked. He was interested and sympathetic; that's why he came with me. And he was somebody that you could talk to. He was, I thought, a very fine man. He then ordered the Public Health Department to activate much more their housing surveillance and began some policing.

I think maybe the job was out of control; you couldn't really do much. But the number of people sleeping in a room, and how the rooms were, and the kind of quarters were all illegal. It was obviously a violation of law. I don't think he ever felt he could really do much about it, but he tried to do a little policing of it.

After the war then there began to be much more concern about, "Let's build. We've got some new public housing now, and let's see if we can improve things."

Nathan: Were these federal funds?

Leary: That's right. It was public housing money that came from the federal government.

Labor was interested in this, I suppose for the jobs, but also because of the idea that they were helping workers be able to live in better quarters. So, there was interest in that at the legislature, but I don't remember, maybe I just haven't jogged my memory a lot, but I don't remember a great deal of concern.

Leary: Of course, housing problems of the migrant farmworkers were a hot political issue nationally in Congress, and the Tolan investigations had gone on, I guess, early. But the urban problem was quite different, and I think the legislature at that stage of the game felt that the local communities had to take care of their own problems.

From City Planning to Regional Planning

Leary: Now, several things kind of developed. There was concern about regional planning. I mean, it came out of planning, the idea that there ought to be some regional planning. And when the first studies about the possibility of a BART system, of a rapid transit system, began, that had initially, for me anyway, exciting planning elements because it was the first time some agency that was responsible sat down and looked at the plans for various communities and how they impinged on each other.

I can remember writing a story sometime about how one county in the plan it was developing for the future had a children's playground precisely next to where the neighbor county planned a sewage outfall.

Sources and Interests

Leary: It was so clear that there was no communication from county to county about what they were planning to do just on these ordinary physical things, and so clear that nobody had sat down to do this.

Now, the regional planners that we found as this thing developed were the phone company--they had to make plans all around--and then we also found that the Bank of America was doing a sort of regional planning because it was looking to where housing developments were coming and where clusters of people would be and business clusters.

A factor that was happening was the encouragement of shopping centers, which relates to the way the tax laws were written. They began to revert part of the sales tax back to the local level, part to counties and part to cities--I've forgotten precisely what the relationship was, how that went. But at first I think counties--I may have this reversed--got a share of the sales tax, and cities did not. It forced shopping centers outside city areas because the counties were encouraging them in order to have the sales there so they could get a share of the sales tax.

Leary: That force of the tax law on what was happening in the way of urban growth, or suburban growth, is fascinating and it would be interesting to develop sometime.

Nathan: Yes, and, of course, the implications for transportation and land use.

Leary: Yes.

Nathan: I had no idea that the tax law was really the impetus.

Leary: This had a lot to do with it. The League of California Cities and then the County Supervisors Associations were in a great struggle about this, and who was going to get that half cent? The League was much shrewder in their approach, but the supervisors really didn't have to be shrewd because they had such weight in the senate that what they wanted done was just almost inevitably going to be done. The county supervisors had so much say with the individual senators, much more power than in the assembly, because the senate and the county supervisors would be coterminous, you know, in their political power. So, they saw eye to eye, and your senator had to see that what the county supervisors wanted was important.

Nathan: Would you care to say anything about the leadership of the League of California Cities?

Leary: It was excellent. It always was. I think I did mention that Dick Graves had been--he was aggressive, intelligent, thoughtful, and a rather exciting person--one of the lobbyists that I mentioned who was in an objective role. You could rely on him for stories and get good stories out of him and also rely on him for information about what was going on.

And the county supervisors were, for a long time, not as aggressive in whom they sent up there. But finally they did send Bill MacDougall, who learned a great deal, I think, from Bud Carpenter. Bud Carpenter was counsel for the League, and when Graves quit, in order to run for governor, then Carpenter became executive director. It is Carpenter who continued with them until his retirement only about four or five years ago and is still consulting with them.

Nathan: Then you did feel that these people would give you information that was reliable and that you could use?

Leary: Oh, yes! As a reporter, I leaned on them, and every other reporter did, not to tell tales out of school; I don't mean to suggest that. I don't mean to suggest that they were very insightful about the

Leary: special interests and so were blabbing to us what was going on. But they understood. They were close enough to the process, much closer than we as reporters, close enough to the process to see and understand what the alignments were and to be able to, on their own clients' behalf, watch what was developing.

You know, it's kind of interesting. Supposing that the lobbyists for agriculture or the milk industry had been as attractive, bright, credible, and so forth, and I don't mean to suggest that they weren't any of those things, but maybe reporters would have worked stories about that more, maybe changed the course of history by writing much more about agriculture.

But, actually, the people dealing with the affairs of the cities after World War II gave you a sense--both from the local level and at the state level, you had a sense of great vitality about it. The evolution at the state level of some leadership on what was happening to urban affairs leads into the regional government thing.

There was a strong move among a lot of people for, "Let's have regional planning. We've got to move toward regional government." And Bud Carpenter clearly concocted an escape from that in developing ABAG [Association of Bay Area Governments] and sold it to other government agencies, the cities and the counties, as a device for coping with regional problems which would not strip the local governments of their power.

Nathan: And it would have to be voluntary?

Leary: Yes. But it was assumed that it would force them into regional thinking and decision-making.

Now, I have never talked to him about what he thought ultimately happened to it, whether it went exactly the way he wanted it to go in not becoming very powerful, or whether he felt that it missed the boat by not doing things a little bit better. But really, it seems to me that it took the mandate from the federal government that there must be a central agency doing something before they could receive federal money for planning, federal money for transportation planning, and so forth, that this became the first catalyst which really forced them into making some decisions, and it was on planning, largely.

Meanwhile, though, they had the advantage of meeting; and perhaps things need to move slowly. There were some advantages in bringing representatives of the cities and the counties together in ABAG, so that they at least sat down around the same problems.

Leary: When the first plans were drawn on what would you do with transit if you had a rapid transit system, they were examining in different areas all kinds of the engineering problems and all kinds of fantasies: what about using helicopters? And what about using pneumatic tubes to shoot people through? And that sort of thing. The idea of finally coming out with a system which was steel on steel, steel wheels on steel rails, seemed very old-fashioned at the time and not nearly as glamorous as some of these recommendations that we were always writing stories about, that wild-eyed inventors were bringing up.

On a different level, the planning was being done, and looking at where people wanted to go, and doing the examinations of, you know, passing out cards to motorists, [asking], "Where did your trip start, and what is your destination?" A great deal of that kind of study was underway as the basis for this great plan, which was the first plan for the Bay Area. I found that a very exciting kind of a regional development.

Port Development

Leary: Along about the same time, something was happening out of the legislature which had been brewing for a long time, and that was concern about the port development in San Francisco. I don't know whether I touched on this before, Harriet.

Nathan: I think not on the tape.

Leary: Long ago, really long ago, there were studies, probably initiated by San Francisco, at about the time of or maybe even before the Stockton port development, when San Francisco saw rivals coming along. There was the desire of Sacramento, which I think came a little bit later, and Stockton, to have ports which would be nearer to the things that they wanted to ship, both the canned goods out of Sacramento and--what do they ship out of Stockton anyway? Wheat, rice.

Nathan: Is it beef?

Leary: Yes. But a lot of it was grain. And they were getting congressional authorization for deepening the channel.

Well, San Francisco legislators and especially Jack Shelley, I think, as state senator, understandably concerned about jobs in San Francisco, got some interim committee studies going concerning

Leary: the Bay and its harbors. Those studies reach back very far: What is the future of the Bay? What kinds of shipping will we have? What ought to improve the port? Always the Port of San Francisco.

Nathan: But it was still at that time governed from Sacramento? It was a state port?

Leary: Yes, yes, it was a state port. And so the pressure was from San Francisco, but saying, "This is a legitimate state interest. The state must be concerned about the future of its port, and the state should not permit Stockton and Sacramento and so forth to set up rivals."

Many people in San Francisco later said to me they felt that the lack of San Francisco's own control over the port explained why the rival ports did develop, that San Francisco may have had some political clout but it simply couldn't move people that were responsible for the port to care enough, and they weren't modern in their approach, and they weren't looking forward, in spite of this study that was done.

The study was done by senators largely at San Francisco's insistence, but it didn't have a lot of state concern; it didn't have a fire built under it. So, meanwhile, Stockton did steal a move on San Francisco.

Nathan: And Oakland at this time, or was that later?

Leary: Oakland came a bit later. But first, Stockton, and then Sacramento got the deepening of the channel for it to have ocean-going vessels go up there. And Oakland began wakening up and getting very aggressive--now, Oakland, of course, had done a lot during the war. It had built a lot of ships over here and, of course, Richmond had.

Richmond, I guess, was just allowed to die down. But the Oakland port people--I think I did mention the Howard family, who had Howard Terminals here.

Nathan: Right.

Leary: They were the early aggressive leaders in seeing the potential for Oakland here.

Nathan: Did they get into containerization then, or was that a little later?

Leary: I think it came a little bit later. I think they just saw the possibilities. They had been successful in building shipyards, and Moore Dry Docks were here, and why not now do much more

Leary: shipping and give San Francisco some competition? And, anyway, everybody thought the San Francisco piers were pretty old, and let's do something new over here. I think the containerization understanding sort of grew and enlarged from that. Besides, Oakland had more space behind its docks.

You know all this anyway, Harriet, really.

Nathan: No, I really don't. I have my own ideas and prejudices, but I don't have the facts, and we don't have them on the tapes.

Leary: No, I'm not suggesting that I'm giving you the facts either.

Nathan: Your interpretation?

Leary: This has to lead, I hope, to factual material behind it.

Proposal for a Golden Gate Authority

Leary: There was a very interesting sequence of studies about Bay development. Out of that concern about the Bay, and then somehow facing up to the reality that, like it or not, San Francisco had to accept that Oakland and others were all starting, there came to be a move for, "Let's regionalize the port. Let's have a port authority." That was kind of an interesting prelude to the whole regional government thing in that it had not a political theory behind it, but a practical economic approach. I mean, "We already have this terrible rivalry now, so let's put some sense into the rivalry. Let's see if we can't greatly encourage traffic into San Francisco Bay and do it without cutting each other's throats."

Nathan: And this was the Golden Gate Authority proposal?

Leary: Well, it grew into that. First of all, there were, I suppose, two to four to six years of talk about the regional port--"Let's just do this as a regional port"--and then it began taking on this aura of, "Let's do it like New York, have the Golden Gate Port Authority," and the name was there, and it was beautiful.

I really do not know quite why, I became very suspicious of the idea. It was very popular, the idea of a port authority, and the aura of the New York Port Authority as an extremely successful, rolling-in-money kind of venture in New York which was fostering the city's growth so much. That was the popular assumption in everything that you read about it and everything.

Nathan: It was before the book on Robert Moses.

Leary: Yes. And Moses was supreme; Moses was the ideal at this stage.

Actually, New York regional planners came out here and gave many talks, were brought out by the San Francisco Planning and Housing Association people, and were rather exciting, interesting people, I found. And New York Transit Authority, I guess, by that time, they had a tri- --

Nathan: Tri-borough?

Leary: Tri-borough kind of miniature regional government, at least for planning purposes, and that was talked about a lot. So, there was a lot of interest about, "Let's model ourselves after New York."

On the one hand you had interest in planning, which was coming along, partly with BART, and partly it was just people talking about planning. But on the other hand you had this concern about the ports, and that really had a quite different source. It was not something that Bud Carpenter was in on, or any of the rest of it.

Nathan: Were these partisan issues, as far as you could tell?

Leary: No, no, except that Republicans tended to feel that there was something sinister in regional government and tended always to say, "That's just the Democratic approach of adding another layer of government, or moving it further away." But it was not really partisan. It was conservative versus liberal, as a lot of things in California were.

I wonder, in looking back, how correct I am about my time schedule on this. But in the midst of this interest in the cities, the University had a program, and I wonder who started it, whether Gene Lee may have, or maybe Bud Carpenter got them into doing it. But somebody at Berkeley got money for a series of meetings which brought business people, Chambers of Commerce heads, and government people together for evening dinner sessions about problems of the future, and that was a very interesting thing. I never covered them, I think partly because I was busy with domestic responsibilities at night and they were evening meetings, but I remember trying very hard to find out what went on at them.

Nathan: Were they at the campus?

Leary: At the campus. They were a kind of experiment in what is now very widely accepted, of bringing the community into the University and exchanging ideas. But at that time it seemed very revolutionary to

Leary: have bankers and top executives of the phone company and this kind of thing invited to be formal participants for a six-week session with different people brought from all over the country then to talk about urban problems.

It brought a lot of people into discussions about regional government, because it was happening right about the time that the port authority thing was being talked about. And among the people who came were some people from New York who had been critical of the port authority. I had discovered some critical magazine articles by them.

And about at the same time, hearings were underway in Congress, which I guess I picked up in some reference--I don't know how I learned it--into the whole port authority thing, which opened my eyes to a lot of the criticism. I mean, it was the first time that I saw things being laid out.

Transit, Tolls, and Highway Funds

Leary: The problem that I sensed--I mean, I always was aware that San Francisco was the only major city whose principal areas of approach you had to pay money to get to. And that always kind of seemed unfair, since we didn't have any fees on any other California highway stretch. Unlike many of the major highways in the East, built as toll roads, California had elected to develop money for their roads through the additional gas tax (the big fight with the oil companies in '47 or '49 mentioned earlier). So, with every other part of the entire state reachable by free roads, it rankled some in San Francisco (and me) that access to San Francisco is the one entry by pay. It still is.

That was a very parochial view on my part, as a reporter on San Francisco affairs. But it made me sensitive to what happens to bridge money and toll money, and very sensitive to the idea of tolls generally. It became clear that the toll money would go toward bridges or toward more transportation things, but not very clear that it would go toward rapid transit.

And with an interest in rapid transit--you asked me, I think before the tape turned, about Collier's attitude toward rapid transit. I had many interviews with him, frequent interviews with him, in which I tried to say, "Isn't there some legitimacy in some automobile transit money, highway money, going toward rapid transit?" And he never, never, never would concede that. I mean, he was absolutely against it and would tease me a great deal about pressing this ridiculous idea upon him.

Leary: So, there was a lot of interest in it, and a lot of concern, and a lot of obduracy on his part against it. At that time it was a very unpopular thing to say. No political leader was really sticking his neck out and saying, "Put some of the highway money into rapid transit."

In wondering how you would fund a transit project and thinking it reasonable that if you had automobiles paying here to come in, they might as well help pay for bringing people in that did not have automobiles--and, you know, I really don't know how much my interest in this whole transit situation may have been due to the fact that I didn't own an automobile. It may have been! Partly, up until about then, I couldn't have afforded one, and partly, I guess, living in San Francisco, and partly being female, you were going to be taken someplace. I always got myself a book of Yellow Cab tickets. You could buy \$10 worth or \$20 worth in books. That way I would feel free to order a cab when I wanted to, and felt that I was paying much less if I paid, say, an average of \$30 a month for a cab than I would have just to garage a car. So, I felt I was ahead of the game anyway.

But basically I was sold on transit, on the possibility of San Francisco needing ways to get into it, especially if it was going to have this great Golden Gateway with all these big highrise office buildings, without bringing automobiles in.

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Nathan: Did you think that boosterism was sort of typical of the times?

Leary: Well, you know, all of the books about the Los Angeles Times and the development of the city of Los Angeles and the county are now so critical--it's so popular to be critical of boosterism. And, of course, a lot of it was fed by the self-interest of real estate developers and that kind of thing, probably more than I realized at the time. But there was this great pride in your own community and seeing it grow and so forth, which was a very popular prevailing attitude in journalistic circles of that time, without any feeling that we were being used by economic interests.

I look at some of the people like Alice Griffith who were extremely suspicious of the big money boys, but very aware that you can't get anywhere without them. Dorothy Erskine was another person, of course, who came along and sort of inherited the Alice Griffith mantle, in my view. In the midst of this urban interest and "Where are we going with city things?" she went on her own to look at other cities, and saw Pittsburgh, and saw what the Mellons had done there, and then saw Rockefeller Center in New York, and came back with the conviction that business leadership in a community had to be drawn into being concerned about the future and where

Leary: they were going to go. They had to commit themselves somehow to lending their own talents and their own drive into aesthetic concepts and not simply more business, but also an environmental amenity that would make their businesses attractive but would also make life attractive. Dorothy Erskine came back just full of drive and did get SPUR started, transformed the San Francisco Planning and Housing Association into SPUR, and deliberately brought business leadership in.

Now, I had been writing in terms of the business leadership interest in BART and was very convinced that farsighted and intelligent business leadership was what made that thing come about. Adrien Falk was one, but Cyril Magnin was critical to it, and he was one of the very first who really led to the suggestion being taken seriously.

Nathan: Why were Christopher and some other San Francisco mayors reluctant to participate in ABAG?

Leary: Oh, because they felt that San Francisco had so much political power superior to other communities that they would be diluting their power.

Nathan: I see. The San Francisco mayors didn't see it quite as other regionalists did?

Leary: No, no. It took a lot of selling to get that ABAG concept, and a lot of persuasion that it was really just an innocuous forum.

Nathan: But when we moved into BART, the San Francisco mayors were no longer reluctant in the same way?

Leary: No, no. Actually, there was a good deal of criticism of the BART plan for having shortchanged San Francisco, for not giving it enough stops along the line and--you know, there was a great desire to have it out around Geary Street, to reach on to the other side of the park, once they abandoned the idea of being able to cross to Marin County, which had been an original part of the plan.

Nathan: Yes, and also San Mateo.

Leary: And San Mateo. The San Mateo thing kind of got lopped off later, but the loss of the Marin connection was purely an engineering decision, and after immense studies done by, oh, some New York bridge people and a lot of others. There was a contention that Strauss had originally built the Golden Gate Bridge strong enough to stand rapid transit, and I am still persuaded that the engineering studies indicated that it would have stood rapid

Leary: transit. But they were committed to trains going at eighty miles an hour, and they said the bridge would not stand two trains passing each other on the bridge at eighty miles an hour, that the vibration set up would destroy the bridge; whether all in one fell swoop, or whether it would wear the metal, I don't know, but, at any rate, that that was a strain that it was not designed for.

Well, I never did understand why everybody wouldn't say, "Well, okay, on the bridge we'll only go thirty miles an hour, and it still would give you the access to Marin." So, there may have been forces against that, which I never unravelled and never came to see. The Marin members of the planning group for BART were stricken by it. They really were very unhappy because they thought this was going to be a great thing for Marin, mostly to keep automobile population down and to make it available conveniently. I remember feeling that that was a great blow to the system to lose the Marin tie. All the engineering studies went into why they couldn't go underground to Marin and so forth. There's no point in going into that now.

The loss of San Mateo was quite different, however, and that you probably know about. It had to do apparently a lot with a real estate builder and developer--I think, Bohannon--who had major holdings around in the San Jose area and felt the potential for San Jose to become a rival to San Francisco. He felt that San Jose had everything to gain by not linking itself with San Francisco, but by maintaining itself as the center of that area down there.

Nathan: Are you saying San Jose, not San Mateo?

Leary: I mean from Palo Alto on.

Nathan: Right.

Leary: The Santa Clara area. He was on the south end of the Bay. He also had holdings at the south end of San Mateo County and, I think, wanted the focus of growth to be toward San Jose, more for his own advantage, instead of toward San Francisco. I think he had a great deal to do with sinking it, and I think it was not even discreet; I think he was quite open about it.

But they did have the Southern Pacific line, and they used that as the alibi why they shouldn't do it. I suspect, with the gas shortage a reality, that before too long BART will at least build into the airport somehow or other and then maybe further than that.

However, to go back just for a minute to the Golden Gate Authority thing, we took on the News an editorial line which differed from the Chronicle and the Call-Bulletin and the Examiner. I think they were

Leary: all very much for the Authority. And largely that was fun because it was something that I became quite convinced of and was able to sell to the newspaper management, that it was not a healthy way to earmark money which would arise from the bridge tolls and from shipping--

Nathan: And from airports too.

Leary: And from the airports, to be exclusively directed in its spending by this new body, which would be removed from the social problems that the city had. There would be no way of developing that money into parks, of delivering it into parks or into housing or into health or any of the rest of these things.

Very, very fortunately, the hearings in New York with a lot of the arguments against the Port Authority and the first major criticism of the Port Authority were just coming out, so that gave me ammunition I could use. It was very lucky that the New York Port Authority had existed long enough for people to see what it did and how it sucked up money and kept it, so that they kept building more bus terminals and more airports and this kind of thing, when maybe the money should have gone toward other things. New York must think so now.

Nathan: They must indeed. Did you feel that people at the University or any civic groups were beginning to think along the lines that you are outlining, or were you sort of out there by yourself at this time?

Leary: Well, there was a newness about the Authority idea. There was a body of scepticism about it, but it was inarticulate, and I think maybe I provided some ammunition that people who had some doubts about it could use. I don't believe anybody else was really looking at it as seriously, except the advocates of the Authority. So, it just developed that that was persuasive enough, because it went on top of the general feeling of "Why do something new?" and the general hostility toward regional government, which, of course, still exists.

You had, let me say this, political power in, for instance, the Golden Gate Bridge District. Those boys weren't going to lose their tidy little area of power. You had the Highway Commission and its area. It didn't want to see anybody moving in and taking away its say over these bridges either. So, I think there was political support inherent in the structures that were there. They never did get, really, a uniform approach toward port traffic.

Nathan: Was Pat Brown governor during this later era?

Leary: Probably; also Reagan.

Nathan: How were the local senators and assemblymen handling it? Did they speak?

Leary: Yes. Now, when did J. Eugene McAteer come along and get the transfer of the port to San Francisco's control? I think it was February, 1969. That, of course, came along and changed things considerably too.

Nathan: He was a real regionalist in a sense.

Leary: Yes, yes. But I think that McAteer felt, "We're not getting anywhere, and so let's let San Francisco at least have its own approach toward its own--let's give the port back." I believe the feeling was that Pat, as a San Franciscan, as governor, could support that earlier, and that McAteer actively did it as a bacon that he could bring home, you know, that was very visible, and it was supposed to be a great thing.

At the time, there was a ballot measure which allowed the state to continue responsibility for the outstanding bonds on San Francisco Port, but which sweetened it up for the rest of the state by having some money given to various other ports along the way, setting up a fund which other ports would be able to tap for development. So, there was a kind of a bond issue, I guess, which was going to give San Francisco Port freedom from debt that was outstanding, plus buying off [chuckles] the rest of the ports who might be opposing this by giving them something for port development.

Oil Industry##

[Interview 5: June 29, 1979]

Nathan: Thinking of some statewide concerns of the period, were you interested in the oil industry and some of the independents?

Leary: Bill Keck, of Superior Oil Company, and Gene Starr, who was with Universal Consolidated Oil Company, were two stormy figures in oil, proud that they were independent and set on staying so. These independents are not small operators; they're very wealthy.

Ruth Finney wrote a great deal in those days about tidelands oil, so that the News was carrying probably more than any other paper in California--a lot from the Washington point of view about what the

Leary: federal government was trying to do, and the sense, I guess, that the federal government felt it could conserve the oil better than the state could.

This article [leafing through notes], well, it tells a lot about Signal Hill and so on and so forth. Presumably these ran someplace, so there's no point in necessarily going back over them.

VI POWER AND INFLUENCE IN CALIFORNIA POLITICS

Leary: I see I have done quite a lot of writing about oil interests in politics but don't feel I know enough accurately to discuss it. However, the influence of Bill Keck and his Superior Oil Company in the legislature in the '40s was very great: maybe next to the Samish influence.

Nathan: There was a mention of Howard Morton and Monroe Butler, both Keck spokesmen.

Leary: As a family-owned company, Superior Oil was able to put money into politics with abandon. Their money evidently funded the conservative right-wing moves against Warren. I always thought the opposition was not on ideological lines but over political power. Keck was a blustery independent-minded person who wanted legislation to help his company and felt Warren blocked him. I have seen news accounts recently (August 25, 1980) that Bill Keck's son, Howard, has pulled Superior Oil Company back from rocky times to such success it now has the highest priced stock on the New York Stock Exchange--and large untapped resources in oil and gas. Even though it is now on the Stock Exchange, it still seems to be very tightly Keck-controlled. Keck's struggle for political power is definitely part of what was going on in the Warren-Knight era. How it touched Knight, I do not know.

Nathan: Apparently H. Allen Smith was backed in the speaker race against Luther Lincoln by the oil people, and it was said that Lincoln had the backing of Neil Haggerty, lobbyist for the California Federation of Labor. So, it looked at this point as though labor and oil in the '50s were not backing the same people.

Leary: To go back to that speakership reference, H. Allen Smith had, as I recall it, the conservative vote, conservative groups generally, anyway; he was a very bright kind of personable man. I think there was also a very strong north-south fight at that time, and Silliman was a kind of compromise.

Labor's Influence

Leary: Haggerty had a good deal of influence at that time in the legislature, and he was a very hard-working, persistent kind of person. He went about observing the legislature and being on tap and setting up a systematic way of following the legislation, which, I think, showed that he had some administrative command. He moved labor into a kind of a new sophisticated realm as far as their approach toward legislative problems was concerned. He knew how to go about it in a businesslike way, whereas before they had been sporadic.

I don't mean that Jack Shelley and others in the AF of L - CIO were not diligent pursuers of labor's interests, but they did it more or less on a personality and personal exchange basis, and their own sort of personal power basis, or would when necessary reach down to the unions and get a lot of local letters written or a lot of local pressure exerted on a legislator.

Whereas, I think Haggerty had a systematic way of looking at a wide range of things and seeing labor's interests in all kinds of insurance measures and pension measures and various things which meant jobs implicitly, and I think he was more of a sophisticated manager. He knew how to wheel and deal. He was a political pro. He added a sort of richer element to labor's representation, at least, I felt that in watching him operate. And, of course, he moved on to the national level then, I think in recognition of this real ability that he had. He was an extremely effective and systematic labor representative.

I'm sure at that point he may really have been at about the peak of his power in the legislature. Well, no. The peak came, of course, during Brown's administration. Was this the end of the Knight, or was this in the Brown administration?

Nathan: I think that the only note that I have is, "...in the '50s, especially with respect to Knight's courting of labor." So, this would be--

Leary: In the Knight administration, and then right after.

Nathan: Yes.

Leary: Warren left in '53, I think. So, this would be in the mid-'50s. And Pat was elected in '58.

Nathan: Right.

Role of Industry vis-à-vis Agriculture

Nathan: Now, would you say that at this time Haggerty made labor's lobbying relatively equal in effectiveness to that of private industry and other interests?

Leary: No, no. Oh, no, to be realistic about it. But much more effective than it had been before.

And maybe the significant subtle thing that was happening was the rise of industry after the war offsetting some of the big agricultural and highly conservative influence. Up until World War II, you had big oil, and you had the merchants and manufacturers in Los Angeles, and the Chamber of Commerce influence when they wanted or needed something done, and you also had the banks, and you also had the liquor interests. But the tone of social legislation, which labor would be interested in, was set a lot by agriculture, and there was this fight between agriculture and labor. So, on workmen's compensation efforts, on all kinds of things that labor was trying to get, from the urban, you might say, populist point of view, the workers who were represented by labor unions, the strong opponents that they faced in the senate committees particularly were agricultural spokesmen. That's why the measures would hang up, and they couldn't get them through the committees.

Nathan: And this may have gone on until the senate was reapportioned, possibly, in the early '60s?

Leary: Yes, I think it largely did. But I think you had the influx of new business, new industry anyway, during the war. The strong surge of new industry, aerospace particularly, which came in during the war, had a different outlook, even in southern California, which had been so anti-labor; they were willing to deal with unions a little bit more.

This meant that industry spokesmen at the legislature might not have been quite as adamant against labor during the Knight period, immediately after the war, in those early '50s. And, besides, that was a period of enormous growth, when industry wanted workers and maybe was more willing to concede unions some rather generous kind of commitments on benefits and on working conditions, even in Los Angeles.

Nathan: And even in their going to organize and be recognized as unions?

Leary: Yes. There was a new period of tolerance of labor, because they simply had to get work out, and the state was just growing like mad. Automobile workers, Clerks Union--

Nathan: Even steel?

Leary: And steel workers. You had Kaiser Steel, at that point able then to do a lot of sub-assembly work for, well, refrigerators and household appliances and things like that and for automobiles, so that steel was being made here.

The unions which had been strong in the East began to be strong here. They had hardly existed here before, United Auto Workers and so forth, and that changed the picture. Industry recognized that they had to work with the unions if they were going to have these large numbers of employees.

If I remember rightly, Kaiser made some rather long-range contract accommodations to unions, so that if layoffs came the unions kind of worked out a deal--this is rough and I'm not trying to do it exactly--but if layoffs came the unions imposed a kind of a pattern about how they would be laid off and set up a pattern by which there would be partial payments to them to cushion unemployment insurance. Everybody was concerned about, "If this boom time ends suddenly, what'll we do?" Well, that sort of an accommodation to labor unions, which was at the Kaiser Steel plant in Fontana, or wherever it is--

Nathan: Fontana is what I was thinking of.

Leary: That represented a new power as far as unions were concerned out here, I think, and that had some reflection in politics as they were growing. Of course, there also was some rivalry from the south among labor people then against what had always been a San Francisco-based labor strength.

Nathan: Right. I suppose the ILWU--

Leary: International Longshoremen and Warehousmen's Union.

Nathan: Yes.

Leary: And Harry Bridges.

Nathan: Yes. That had been, I suppose, a well established San Francisco labor power.

Leary: Yes, but it's separate. It's separate from the other ones, since they pulled out so long ago.

Nathan: Yes.

Leary: But the Longshoremen were always a key factor in San Francisco's being a strong labor town. But so was the Carpenters Union; I mean, the Building Trades, which is what Haggerty came out of. And Jack Shelley had been in the Milkwagon Drivers Union, so that Teamsters generally--I think originally Teamsters had been the political power in the unions in San Francisco.

But jobs related to the waterfront were so significant, and the Warehousemen/Longshoremen then were able to work into that. So, it's sort of that this political power was related, you're right, to the Longshoremen's Union. It changed some when Harry Bridges decided to go independent, and it was severely affected by the Red scare.

Nathan: Yes.

The Note of Political Alarm

Leary: I was looking through some clippings and saw a reference to Nixon. We're moving ahead a little bit on timing, but Nixon was blasting Governor Brown about subversive speakers on the State University campuses and so forth. And Nixon is citing--this is in 1961--various people who spoke on the campuses and derides Brown for saying, "There hasn't been a Communist speaker on a campus in the four years I've been governor."

So, then, in what I must say looks back to a previous period in Washington, Nixon brings out a long list of people that he says were--if not Communists, they were people who refused to speak, to identify what their relationship was to the Communist party, and included among them were Harry Bridges, Archie Brown, Frank Wilkinson, and others who may have refused to take oaths about subversive activities and so forth.

This comes out of the campaign for re-election in '62 when Nixon ran against Brown. But in just picking that up, it recalls to me that really that had been a strong vein of political alarm that threaded through a lot of things.

Nathan: Beginning right after the war, would you say?

Leary: Yes.

Nathan: 'Fifty-two?

Leary: Yes. I can't identify exactly what brought it all up. It will take some study to go back and see what were the issues that prompted this.

But it was after Brown's election, particularly in '58--labor itself was internally, I think, at the end of the Knight time, fighting what may have been Communist infiltration, but certainly was extreme left-wing infiltration. Labor itself was caught up by this struggle to clean its own mess without letting external forces come in.

But, in the meanwhile, the Republicans generally were using a blanket blast at Democrats with charges that Communist infiltration had come. I can't remember the people whose names figured in this, but the CIO leadership particularly was charged with having Communist dominance; and AF of L, having been separate before they were united, kept its skirts a little bit cleaner, at least in the public mind, and I think probably did. They probably were a little bit more conservative in their leadership than the CIO leadership.

That fight was on and affecting political things in the state. It certainly was affecting Democratic fortunes, because the Democrats always had to stand up against the charge that they were dominated by the Communists. And in the 1946 election, which I think we have touched upon before, I believe Warren felt that there were extreme left-wing and maybe Communist influences in the Democratic party on pressures on Kenny.

Nathan: Yes.

Leary: I think Kenny left the state for a good part of the campaign time, was in Europe or something?

Nathan: Yes. And wasn't there someone from Contra Costa County who was caught up in these charges?

Leary: Well, Condon.

Nathan: Condon, of course.

Leary: Yes. And even, one of the curious things to me, the most recent state Democratic chairman, Bert Coffey, had worked in connection with one of the Condon campaigns. Of course, Condon wound up as a judge and settled down into a career that would hardly suggest that he had been a Communist. But he was fighting this kind of really hard serious Communist allegation.

Leary: Contra Costa County had some scrappy, pushy, left-wing people, but I never did feel they were identified Communist party members. But I felt they were deliberately trying to push the party into issues, positions, which were idealistic and leftish. Those three men's names, Coffey, Masterson, and Condon, got involved in it.

It has amused me very much to see Bert Coffey as chairman of the party now at a rather conservative period in history and to remember, as I do, his coming to the office years back to tell me urgently and personally that he was not a Communist party member and that to his knowledge neither Masterson nor Condon were, and he thought it important for papers to carry something of this. Whether I wrote such a story, or whether that was just something to influence policy on endorsements, I don't know, because the News used to endorse around the Bay Area and support Democrats, and it often was the only newspaper support the Democrats had around the Bay Area. I was kind of anxious to keep our Bay Area-wide political endorsement going for that reason. His conversation to me may have been more designed to keep our political endorsements at least hospitable to some of these Contra Costa Democrats, rather than just to have me write a story about this.

I recall it as symptomatic of the kind of struggle that everybody was having in those days. If you took a position which could be identified with a position the Communist party had officially taken, then you were definitely tagged as Communist-aligned anyway.

Nathan: This was the McCarthy era, wasn't it?

Leary: It was.

Nathan: "If you walk like a duck--" Do you remember that one?

Leary: Yes!

It haunted the state political picture, and today people forget that totally. It's just gone. It also haunted, of course, the universities, and the whole question of how open public discussion could be. We've come a long way through the Free Speech Movement. And it certainly haunted labor unions, who I'm sure were often uneasy about the leadership that got too anxious to have them take liberal positions on things. So, it was an uncomfortable time.

Knight tried in his kind of happy way to keep some balance then and to keep his own balance. Well, I'm recalling this just because it was an underlying theme and you never quite knew how far to go.

Leary: I can remember a labor official telling me that he was shocked to find what looked like a move for a takeover in his union, telling me very confidentially--I never did write about it--that he did find extreme left-wing elements in there. He never did say that they were Communists, but that there were extreme left-wing elements.

The Levering Act

Nathan: Perhaps one last question about the Levering Act. Were you particularly concerned with the consequences. One of them was, I think, that people had to take an oath in order to use a public building.

Leary: Yes. That was a terrible fight. I'd forgotten that, yes. Which meant schools, really.

Nathan: It meant schools. Yes.

Leary: And I think it was intended to mean schools, to prohibit their use. This was a time of a certain amount of consumer group organization too and many groups wanted to use the schools.

Reporting on Politics##

Leary: As you talk about this theme, in the legislature (the Levering Act) I can remember sitting in the senate and hearing some terrific debates on the senate floor. I imagine the Sacramento Bee of this era is full of stories about the fight over the Levering Act, the News too. [tape off briefly during telephone interruption]

In looking at Gladwin Hill's story about Nixon's defeat by Brown in '62, it reminded me that in this particular era you should check his book, Dancing Bear.

Nathan: Oh, right.

Leary: Yes, he wrote for the New York Times in California.

Nathan: Yes.

Leary: I also have picked up a clipping, just because I think it's kind of interesting, on some stuff we were talking about before [unfolds clipping], a Los Angeles Times story from May 3, 1963. Nixon's move to the east coast, to a New York law firm, had been predicted by [Murray] Chotiner. It's a story by Carl Greenberg and it says that [reads from story], "Chotiner's forecast of Nixon's probable removal to New York was made in an interview to this writer, published on November 25, 1962," right after the election, then. [resumes reading] "...Chotiner said Thursday. He based his prediction then in large part on a long personal conversation with the former vice-president and defeated gubernatorial candidate. The Beverly Hills attorney, who was national manager of Nixon's 1952 vice-presidential campaign..." I'd forgotten that Chotiner had exactly that role. [resumes reading] "...was one of two intimate friends of Nixon who rode home with Nixon when the latter made his bitter farewell address to the press the morning after his defeat. The other close friend was Jack Drown, Long Beach magazine distributor, who Nixon unsuccessfully backed for Los Angeles County GOP chairmanship."

What Greenberg is doing in this story is spelling out specifically how close Chotiner was to Nixon and making it perfectly clear in just relating these little incidents that Chotiner was that intimate with him.

[resumes reading] "In the Times interview last November, Chotiner, who had served as an unpaid advisor to Nixon during the gubernatorial campaign, said he thought Nixon might sell his... home and move with his family to New York or Washington to practice national and international law and would speak out on national and world issues." So, then it says, "Nixon announced in New York Thursday that he would be doing this."

This is a beautiful story by Greenberg, just spelling out exactly how intimate Chotiner was and how part of the inside he was. Carl Greenberg has retired and is in Los Angeles, and I think I have his address if you need it. But I think he would be a very fine person for some interviews, if you could do it, some oral history interviews.

He not only was the one who Nixon said was the only one who did not crucify him during the campaign, who wrote objectively--he named Carl by name--but Greenberg had a very great deal of esteem from his peers in the press for being a very careful reporter and a very objective reporter, never letting his own views come in. But this story is an example of how he could size up what was going on and get it all down on the record, but without in any way being slanted, so that he wouldn't have a single adjective in there that could be pointed to as showing opinion. He was simply telling the facts. I think he was an excellent reporter.

Breaking into Politics

Leary: I found another little item. We had been talking about the difficulties of people getting into politics, young people breaking their way into politics. I came across a letter from 1948, December 28, from Sally Fay. The Fay family has been involved in politics a good deal. I can't remember now what ever happened to Sally Fay, but at this time she was living at 1201 California and, of course, was of a family with considerable means.

This is a letter to Frank Clarvoe, the News editor, which he sent off to me with a question mark, and I probably did nothing about it. But the letter says [reads from letter], "Many young people in this area are interested in politics and want to do something about it. Their trouble is they don't know how to do it or how to get into it. The press could give them a guide in articles showing different ways by which they could enter civic affairs, opening their eyes to local opportunity and making their interest practical."

And then she goes on to say, "Here's a record of my own activities. I graduated from Stanford in '45 and have since established a Republican Open Forum, worked as a recorder for a UNESCO conference, attended secretarial school, World Affairs Council..." and so on, "...and was one of five northern California lobbyists for Stassen."

Obviously, this is interesting to me because from the Republican side, she is showing the same impatience with how to break into the organization that the Democrats had. And she reminds me of a time when a "new broom" kind of group had almost an outburst of fisticuffs in a San Francisco Republican County Committee meeting when a group of young people after the war--I think maybe Chet McPhee as a supervisor and somebody else as a supervisor were part of this new group trying to oust some old-timers. They had physically to fight their way into the room where the committee was meeting and insist upon opening it up to votes by others than the old-timers. And I remember being caught in the crush, and so I have a rather vivid feeling of it having been a real physical effort.

That was just illustrative of new groups trying to figure out how to get into politics, because the committee itself just stayed in office. What do I want to say? They kind of kept themselves in power and kept newcomers out. The party structures on both sides were being assaulted by these young eager beavers after the war. It was kind of an amusing letter to find.

Nathan: Isn't it? Very eloquent too. It makes me think of the rise of the California Democratic Council, the Democratic clubs.

Leary: Yes, the CDC.

Nathan: And wasn't Alan Cranston the president at one time?

Leary: Yes. Alan Cranston, I think, may have been the founding president of it.

That was a kind of exciting, heady time when they thought they were really going to get the Democratic party, a group, to come together on issues.

Hadn't Alan been active in either One World or World Government or something like that?

Nathan: He was a World Federalist.

Leary: World Federalism. And that issue, again labelled "Communistic" by a lot of people and serious assailed as a thing that the Communists wanted--[expressing the attitude of the assailers] that was clear it was a Communist plot to get us involved in World Federalism--was, I guess, one of the main issues which forced a group of young people to say, "Let's have our own organization, the CDC."

And I think maybe Alan had a greater sense of how to organize and how to go about it than a lot of other people who were just interested in sitting around a room arguing. Was the first meeting at Fresno, or something like that? I think it was. Fresno became a place to try to draw north and south together and figured in political meetings a lot for that reason, even though it was difficult to get to.

Also very active at that time [was] the Democratic woman leader from Berkeley whose name is--

Nathan: Clara Shirpser?

Leary: Clara Shirpser, who's been trying to write her biography lately. Clara, maybe because she had a little bit of means, could help support some of these efforts; she had lots of enthusiasm. This seemed like a great worthwhile cause, and it was the Adlai Stevenson climate too, I think, which inspired a lot of people to say, "Ideas matter. Issues matter. Politics is moving into this era where we can express ourselves strongly on issues now," and he certainly inspired Clara.

Nathan: And then later Kefauver was one of her interests, I know.

Leary: Yes, being, I guess, about the best that was around at the time, and so forth.

Nathan: Yes!

Leary: He had a rather exciting kind of campaign time in California.

Nathan: Stevenson?

Leary: Kefauver. Kefauver had, because by that time the CDC was going, and the younger group of people desiring to be active in politics felt they had a place to go to anyway, in a way were allies in common. And so they infused quite a sense of excitement into the campaign. That hadn't gotten formed when Jimmy Roosevelt was running, so you didn't have a rallying point, and it hadn't, I guess--let's see. Was this '52?

Nathan: [reading from notes] "Stevenson-Kefauver, '56" is what I have.

Leary: Fifty-six, then. All right. So, it was right in the middle of the period that you're interested in right now.

And there was at the University of California the professor, Peter Odegard, who ran for the Senate, wanted to run for the United States Senate, but who also, quite apart from his own candidacy, was an activist person encouraging young people to get in and share some political life. He was a force, I think, in this Democratic party, even though he was a very poor candidate, actually. I was extremely disappointed because I was very fond of him, thought his ideas were great, and he was an interesting person, but when he got up on a platform he became a very dull person. And you can't translate classroom command into a political scene very easily, I discovered. It really isn't the same thing at all. I remember hearing a young person tell me that in his own classes Odegard was so much an advocate of liberal political ideas that this young person said, "I went out and registered Republican just to rebel against him." So, that had its pros and cons, I guess, as far as effectiveness was concerned.

But those were days when there was a--it wasn't radicalism, but there was a sense of excitement about being able to get into politics and affect the world, which the people coming out of the war and young people felt in general that everyone should do. Also, they certainly had this new interest, awareness of one-worldism, this new concern, because they'd had the experience, a

Leary: lot of them, of being in either Europe or the South Pacific--that we weren't alone, and we had to figure out how to live with the rest of the world. And that was a shot in the arm to politics. It was quite new. It certainly changed things in California.

The Move Against Cross-Filing

Leary: Then, down in Los Angeles, John B. Elliott, who was an old-time Democrat, led the drive to get a change in the cross-filing, to do away with cross-filing--and, of course, that was a significant move.

Nathan: Oh, yes.

Leary: He was fairly wealthy and, I believe, a lawyer. By this time he must have been, oh, you know, terribly ancient, like in his mid-sixties. He led a drive by a lot of the old-time and sedate Democrats to say, "Let's break this thing. A Democrat will never get power until they do away with it." I suppose the Warren victory in '46 shocked everybody so much that that gave a great impetus to it. I can't remember the year when the abolition of cross-filing was finally passed.

Nathan: It was 1959.

Leary: It was part of this yeastiness. Now, of course, this was by this time quite a different Democratic party from what had emerged with Olson.

Nathan: But there was the identification of the candidate's party before the end of cross-filing. That was earlier.

Leary: That's right. That was the first move that they were able to succeed with. They started with a half measure, which was pretty lucky.

Nathan: Yes, right.

Leary: Well, of course, I guess the State of Washington or the State of Oregon has no party registration at all. You can go in and choose any kind of a ballot and identify yourself and vote for anybody across the ticket.

Harriet, this is merely impressionistic stuff, and it isn't the kind of detail that you need. But I do feel that that was a period in which both parties became rather vitalized, and there was a sense of party spirit.

Nathan: Right. Did the Young Republicans or another group do the same things?

Leary: Not nearly as much. But the same infusion of young people as I've been mentioning in the San Francisco County fight affected the Republican party as well as the Democratic party. They did not have at the national level as--well, they had Eisenhower, and perhaps that was a symbol for them after the war of the kind of leadership they were after too. But I think Stevenson coalesced a sense of identification better for some of the young people than Eisenhower did for the older, for the Republicans. Somehow, at least, I sense that.

It's probably unfair, because there were lots of people whom I think of now as very strong and quite idealistic Republican leaders in the last decade who got their first taste of it immediately after the war in those '50s. And there was a good deal of idealism in both parties in the young people who were coming on.

Warren was constantly talking, not in a preachy way, but about government ideals in a kind of somewhat moralistic tone, "service to the people" stuff, which would go over well with the Democrats as well.

Changes in the Political Climate

Leary: And this was a new kind of a group of people who came in. They were not necessarily identified with Warren and did not identify with the "good government" concept that Warren had had, but had this urge to translate their concern about the future into an ideal, doing service for the public and government.

These views of the young people strike me as interesting today because they contrast with the general revulsion against government which characterizes the post-13 climate.

By "post-13" or post-Proposition 13, I refer to the whole movement towards public acceptance of an anti-government sentiment: part of it, a philosophical view that government had grown too large, and impinged too intimately on personal life; part of it, a sense government took too much in taxes. But another part, growing out of the disillusionment at political leadership which Watergate bred, was an attitude of dislike for public officials, and distrust of them, which was distinctly new in California. It contrasted with the esteem in public service Warren had worked to establish, and

Leary: which really Hiram Johnson had tried to establish with his insistence on civil service, and his coterie of idealistic young people dedicated to "good government." This new attitude of dislike and distrust for people in government came into focus in 1978 when the Howard Jarvis tax measure, cutting property taxes in half, was overwhelmingly approved by the voters. But it is only fair to note that the climate of distrust and dislike was encouraged a good deal by Reagan's rhetoric through the late '60s, and the scorn he heaped on Pat Brown and Democrats, at least implicitly, in his attacks on welfare, on the universities, on Medicaid and such. The social disorders of the mid and late '60s which nobody really knew how to deal with--Watts riots, student protests, et cetera--made it possible for Reagan to target government as the agency at fault.

It's not impossible nowadays to find people interested in government because, well, there are active Young Republicans who are concerned about bringing efficiency into it and that kind of thing, and then there are a lot of Democrats who are fantastically involved and interested in the whole environmental movement, and these young people have had a mark on government definitely.

But there was a sense of wanting to serve there, wanting to get into it personally, which was characteristic of the '50s and I don't think exists today. The Vietnam war, no doubt, and Watergate had a lot to do with it. So, it is an historic change in the political climate.

Nathan: Did you see this reflected in the legislature?

Leary: Yes, in young people coming in who seemed to be better trained. The pay level got boosted and began attracting good people--in contrast to what I think I have mentioned at another time, the difficulty of prewar and during the war, the difficulty of attracting anybody with any pride or capability. Going and spending even three or four months of his life at \$100 a month, or whatever it was, taking time out to go up to the legislature, that was just simply not attractive to people. After the salaries went up--I felt that was important.

Nathan: They did go up a couple of times. Did you think that Unruh's efforts in boosting the research capabilities of the legislature helped at all?

Leary: Oh, it helped very much, although I don't think it was particularly a key to attracting good people. I think the most important thing was to make sure that they had a good per diem. Earlier, legislators would stretch committee work, so that they would be able to

Leary: get paid through committees. The slick thing was to get on two or three committees and be busy with those, so that you could almost get year-around pay if you were clever at it.

But when they got a per diem up that was respectable and a salary up that was at least a decent recompense, after the war they began getting young lawyers and people who were interested. They saw this as a way to advance themselves, of course. So, the talent, the calibre, went up, especially and notably in the assembly, and they began drawing younger people into the senate too to replace some of the old-timers.

But the different districts of California produced such different kinds of people. It was always kind of interesting that you would get rural people who were conservative, and you would get labor-oriented people out of San Francisco or Contra Costa County, that sort of thing, and Alameda. And so the mix, I thought, was a pretty good representation from the whole state, of those who elected them, you know. Where the power was, was a little bit different, but at least the people were representing different points of view.

Maybe there are other issues you'd like to touch on.

The Bonelli Case and the Board of Equalization

Nathan: Well, this sense of the way things worked, I think, is very worthwhile. I was wondering as you talked about the different kinds of people coming into government whether reform ideas began to develop at this time. I was thinking of Bonelli's indictment in the liquor scandals in 1954. Were you particularly interested in that?

Leary: Oh, yes. I was very interested in the Bonelli case and his flight to Mexico to avoid indictment. The alarms about the liquor lobby dominance were really kind of seething before the Colliers article came out.

Nathan: Was this the one about Samish?

Leary: Yes, yes. But the Bonelli thing tied into that then. It all had to do with a sort of power link-over with the Board of Equalization.

Nathan: Right.

Leary: Interestingly enough, the executive secretary of the Board of Equalization, Dixwell L. Pierce (1954), managed to be a brilliant tax expert and to keep abreast of what California was doing in relation to taxation and in relation to other states, and to keep us up to date and modern, and run the office almost impervious to the influence of the board itself. In other words, there was a really esteemed tax operation going on in California and a sense that we were up to date and had a fairly sound approach toward how much we should be taking from the racetracks and how much we should be taking in the sales tax and the corporate taxes and so forth. At least, let me say, administratively and on recordkeeping and so forth, this was a dignified and a really respected office.

It's curious that some really good tax experts in the state came through that office, and it's curious that that function was going on all the time that the liquor interests were also so strong on the board. I do think that they managed to get people placed into jobs in the various departments of the Board of Equalization. Samish did when he wanted to and had access to all information that he needed at the same time.

But I'm trying to think of how the Bonelli thing developed. The press had a lot to do with Bonelli. The Los Angeles Daily News and the--[pauses to think] The Los Angeles Times--what was their other paper? The Los Angeles Mirror?

Nathan: Right.

Leary: And the existence of the Daily News, which [Manchester] Boddy had started--

Nathan: Oh, yes.

Leary: And, you know, parenthetically, that paper as a voice--it had been created down there as a liberal voice--was another factor in this yeast of Democratic spirit at this time. It was important, if you were going to have a resurgence--or, not "re..." because when had they been here before?--but a surge of Democratic party identification, to have a paper that could be writing about it, and especially because the Times in those days virtually threw out everything Democratic. So, the existence of the Boddy paper was a very important part of this effort of the Democratic party to find its identity.

Then there was the Times' effort to fight them by establishing the Mirror and so forth, bringing some vigorous, young, what would be called today investigative reporters--but that's been my idea of what a reporter's supposed to be anyway--and giving them a little bit more headway than they had before.

Leary: Some of the Mirror reporters got right out into the liquor industry right away, about the manipulation of licenses, and how people sold them, how expensive they were, and their controls of licenses for on-sale and off-sale, and the control of beer and wine licenses in one direction, and then hard liquor licenses in another. You might be able to get, if you were friendly with somebody, at least a beer and wine license, but you couldn't get a hard liquor license unless you knew somebody and went through such-and-such.

Those two papers--and I can't remember, but I think it was the Mirror largely--unravelled a great deal of the southern California crookedness in the liquor licensing.

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Leary: Really what I'm getting at, I think, is that--I hadn't quite thought this through before, following the Colliers article and the exposure of Samish through that piece--there was a more alert press looking into things and a general air of suspicion about the liquor world as a whole.

Nathan: And there was competition among the papers?

Leary: And the competition among the papers, exactly, and a new young generation of reporters. All of this led to an exposé of things which had simmered along unnoticed, pretty generally recognized, but nobody knowing how to get at it.

These new papers, you see, would give a reporter the time to go and run down things. It took an immense amount of time to trace license handling and to get people to talk.

Nathan: So, that was how they did it. They would trace the license.

Leary: They had big exposés about the whole thing of single control. What ultimately they showed was that nobody got a liquor license unless Bonelli agreed to it.

Nathan: I see.

Leary: And that he had complete dominance in southern California, in that area, over the handling of liquor licenses. Bonelli had been a fairly fascinating guy. I'm sure all of this is in lots of published records. But he had been a political science teacher and was fairly brilliant about how to handle government and then got himself into the Board of Equalization and got this kind of control. And I think, you know, you begin to find out how to do things and how to use power, and you begin to use it more and more.

Leary: I don't know that anybody has ever analyzed the relationship between Bonelli and Samish on whether they sort of divided power and authority in the state, or worked out deals together. That would be a fascinating thing if it were done. But they certainly had a teamwork going of some sort.

The press had a good deal to do--now, we got into this because you asked about a reform move. There was a sense of revulsion against this old-fashioned boss control over everything, which some of the younger members of the legislature sensed and were expressing, especially in the assembly. There was the general fact of the dominance of the liquor interests, and their thrust into other lobbies. I mean, the log-rolling that was important was done not so much between the legislators as between the lobbyists. They would help each other on one thing or another.

Nathan: I see. And did you feel that the gambling and the liquor and other interests especially were effective in the Senate Governmental Efficiency Committee? Was that--?

Leary: Oh, yes, definitely. Yes, that was the place where they had the power. All measures of that kind were sent directly there in order to be taken care of according to how the interests wanted them taken care of, yes.

Horse Racing and the Orange County Fair

Nathan: And Senator Swing? Was that where he came in?

Leary: I think so, yes. Senator Swing headed the committee that heard all the bills related to liquor and gambling and horse racing. As I recall it, he had close links with the Orange County Fair, too. The county fairs were important because of the horse racing run at them.

Nathan: Oh, I see. Yes, of course.

Leary: The allotment of certain days for horse racing, and the state's share of that, but then also who was going to decide about whether they got any horse racing or not--all this was pretty critical as part of this gambling, horse-racing-world interest.

Orange County Fair would someday make a special interesting story of its own, because it did have a lot of political power.

Nathan: This Orange County Fair, then, was sort of a focus of the racing interests?

Leary: Yes. It was a special pet of Senator Swing's and of various interests, and it came in for a share. I think there was an investigation of it ultimately by one of these reform-minded committees, and some charges brought against people there. It was a funnel of some kind for either influence or money, and maybe both. It was only one, though, of many areas where decisions were made by the Governmental Efficiency Committee.

Nathan: So, did you feel then when the control of liquor licensing was taken away from the Board of Equalization, when those functions were separated, that this was basically a reform effort?

Leary: Yes, yes. It was intended as that, and it was that, yes. I think it was presented by some of the lobbies of the business types that were just fed up with having to make so many deals themselves with the liquor people and preferred to have a little more freedom. So, I wouldn't say, you know, it was only the press and it was only the legislature. I think the interests in California were beginning to be restless at having this sort of underworld influence.

Gambling Interests and Organized Crime

Leary: Of course, about the same time the gambling interests were trying to break into California with slot machines and particularly to establish into the state the communication links on which the bookies and so forth could move information, the bookmaking wires.

Pat Brown, as attorney general in this period, was actively fighting against a major move of organized gambling across the whole country to come into California. The move against it had been somewhat initiated by Warren, but he ran up against the problem of Fred Howser as attorney general.

Nathan: This is "Howser the Bad?"

Leary: "Howser the Bad." H-o-w-s-e-r [spelling out name]. H-ous-e-r was United States Senator.

Nathan: Right. He was "the Good," and this was "the Bad," yes.

Leary: I suppose one could put gradations of both good and bad, but--

Nathan: Right. This is shorthand only!

Leary: The underworld characters who established those ships were targets for law enforcement over quite a long time. But they were only one instance of gamblers--very large-scale gamblers--trying to get a foothold in California.

Nathan: Was this very important in getting Pat Brown well known and established throughout the state, or was he known before?

Leary: He was pretty well known before through the District Attorneys Association. He was very respected because he ran counter to--oh, not strikingly, but to some extent counter to--a rather tolerant period in San Francisco where gambling particularly had been accepted, and bookmaking was large-scale; and I think I've mentioned about the gambling on the political races and so forth. These were open areas where bets were placed with betting commissioners, they were called, these betting places, all as illegal as could be, but they were tolerated in San Francisco.

Now, I wouldn't say that Brown actually ran them out, but he began putting the lid down on a great deal of the bookmaking. There was an awful lot of bookmaking in San Francisco. And he shocked people by beginning to send them to San Quentin and saying, "This is against the law."

The district attorneys generally around the state were glad to have somebody from a major area stand up for law enforcement against the crowd that they were fighting all the time, and I think they were very supportive of Pat Brown as he began moving in this direction.

Fred Howser was district attorney in Los Angeles when he ran for attorney general.

San Diego and Ventura stand out in my mind as places where strong district attorneys were trying hard to fight against the encroachment of criminal elements, and they gave a lot of support to the fight against organized crime. And when Pat Brown became attorney general--and I think the district attorneys generally did a lot to support him; I mean, Democrats, of course, and labor, of course, but I think the district attorneys too--it was in the midst of this recognized effort which the press wrote a lot about to combat an invasion of organized crime.

It was one thing to tolerate sort of domestic, locally run gambling. But the idea of creating a statewide network was disliked generally by law enforcement, because you never knew

Leary: how big that was going to get, and, in addition to that, there was the threat of eastern gangsters moving in and trying to get control. So, there was a lot of concern about that and interest in that, and I think that was involved in Pat Brown's moving forward, because he was vigorous in that role.

Nathan: Were you involved in covering any of these various efforts?

Leary: Well, of course, my husband, Arthur Sherry, was at that time chief assistant to Pat Brown in the criminal division. And so he was leading with Warren Olney--partly, first through one of the Warren committees against crime, and then later on--one of the groups that Warren had set up as a special committee to investigate problems that had to do with organized crime. They moved particularly in relation to the efforts of the eastern gangsters and the bookie-wire people who had come in. And from that, having worked on that with Warren, then Arthur Sherry became Pat Brown's chief assistant in criminal law.

Nathan: What a fascinating time.

Leary: So, that was an interesting period in the history of crime, and being in touch with this, although it wasn't always related to my work, just sort of peripheral to my work at that time. But it made me very aware of this as a very active part of government at that time.

Nathan: You had already sort of turned your interest toward some of the more regional questions, had you, in the mid-'50s?

Leary: Well, I was--because this came along about--

Nathan: Baby first?

Leary: Baby first. My baby was born in '52. And so I did not go back into the political coverage after, except on a couple of instances--I think, '56 and a couple of periods there when something locally happened. Vernon O'Reilly had been covering it, and then he was ill for a while. I think he had a heart attack or something then. So, I took over for a while. There were a couple of periods when I filled in, as it were, so I was back at the legislature some. But basically I was working in San Francisco and writing about the urban affairs development and the regional government sort of thing, yes.

Nathan: Right. I have a few other things at the state level. I might just mention them.

Leary: Yes.

Un-American Activities Committee

Nathan: If they are something you want to talk about, fine. Otherwise, we can move along, certainly.

When Burns became president of the senate in '56--this, of course, would relate closely to some of the water developments--were you in and around Sacramento at that period?

Leary: Some of the time. Burns, of course, had a number of irons in the fire. Burns had been, I think, not unfriendly to some of the Samish interests. I don't believe that he was necessarily allied with them, but he was not unfriendly.

He also had taken over from Tenney the chairmanship of the Un-American Activities Committee and, I think, did it in an effort to try to keep it from running into some sort of crazy line that would serve Tenney politically but not follow some dignified fashion.

There was an uproar in the senate over Tenney when, at one point--and I believe I mentioned this earlier--during O'Gara's service as senator from San Francisco, the Un-American Activities Committee staff guy brought out a charge that a number of Democrats, including people in the senate, were allied with Communists. This struck everybody in the senate as going a mite too far, and it really brought an explosive kind of repercussion where they said, "This thing is out of hand," and led to the stripping of that committee from Tenney and Burns' taking it over.

After that, it became much less conspicuous. Their committee investigator did continue work, though, and did continue this alarm which Nixon picked up, of course, about speakers on the campuses and that sort of thing.

Nathan: On the campuses, yes. So, the investigations continued, but less publicly.

Leary: Yes. Tenney was making lots of publicity for himself out of all kinds of allegations. Burns simply removed that and tried to run it, I suppose you might say, more responsibly. He didn't pay very much attention to it, actually; he let it go its own way.

Nathan: I see. The name of Alex Sherriffs came up in connection with some campus investigations. Was he in any way in touch with Burns?

Leary: Well, I don't know. Alex Sherriffs clearly was a person whose conservative bent gave him alarms about an infiltration, or what he feared to be an infiltration, of radicalism into the campuses. I have never known, actually, where he got information, or to whom he fed it, or how it was linked. I just know that he turned up then as education specialist for Reagan.

I think he had a natural line of belief that made him see great danger in some of the people who were speaking on the campus and this kind of thing. So, it would be reasonable for him to have had some relationship, but I don't know that.

Nathan: Let's see. I was thinking about the Democratic State Committee, let's say, in September of '56 when they were discussing the issues: oil, water, the San Luis Reservoir, and so on.

Leary: Well, yes. I can't remember at that point whether tidelands oil-- it probably was.

Nathan: It was still an issue?

Leary: Yes. There was a great question, I guess, and I have forgotten what the major thrust was, whether--the liberal position was to have the federal government take over the tidelands oil on the assumption that there would be less big oil influence, that the states were more subject to big oil influence. Of course, I don't think there's anything in the record to suggest that they are less subject to big oil influence. But there was a great concern about tidelands oil, and I can't remember exactly how it all went.

The 160-Acre Limitation

Leary: But the water program developed, of course--as the San Luis Project began and the Trinity River was turned around, parts of it turned to flow into that project--there were some very hot issues over the 160-acre limitation, over whether or not that could be avoided in the Central Valley. And you may remember that in the Knight administration, as attorney general Brown reversed the state's position as to whether or not the 160-acres did apply in Central Valley. Howser as attorney general undertook litigation to try to break the 160-acre limit.

Nathan: These were federally funded projects.

Leary: Yes, yes. And, of course, the San Luis Project was federally funded.

It was an old case in which the Ivanhoe Water District was trying to hold itself free from the 160-acre limit. Howser had supported their opposition to it, and Brown reversed the state on it.

Nathan: Oh, yes.

Leary: That's the Ivanhoe case, which became very important historically after the Supreme Court ruling. The Supreme Court held that the 160-acres was a proper and just imposition by the federal government as a limitation in order to distribute as widely as possible the benefits of the water developed by the federal funds. That reversal of the state's position was an historic move by Brown, by the attorney general's office, and it made a lot of difference then. Maybe as they're trying now to do away with 160-acres or modify it, which will in effect do away with it, there will be another change.

Nathan: But it's never been enforced, has it?

Leary: Oh, it has been enforced to some extent. Oh, yes. Oh, yes. There are lots and lots of ranches that are really limited to 160 acres and draw water on that basis. It has become popular to say it was not enforced, and has been evaded a lot, so it ought to be done away with. It was indeed evaded, and on a large scale, with the tolerance of many people in the Department of Reclamation. It had been evaded by people who are able to subdivide ownership patterns in a way, among family, or purported leases, or various things like that, so that it could on the record look as though 160-acres was being followed, but, as a matter of fact, there have been a lot of false companies set up and this kind of thing.

Nathan: I see. That's interesting.

Leary: The evasion that was successful was in the creation of the State Water Project, which did not have a 160-acre limitation.

As the Department of Reclamation brought down the Trinity River water and brought in the San Luis Project, the great reservoir which holds the water, brought the canal along the east side of the Central Valley, sort of coordinating the canals down as far as San Luis Obispo jointly with the state project. In setting that up there were all kinds of efforts to do away with the 160-acres because there was some commingling of waters and that sort of thing. And there were some strong debates in the senate to insist that the 160-acres be retained. Now we will see how that chapter gets carried out again. I don't know--.

Leary: The water issue was very prominent. Abbott Goldberg was the deputy attorney general who carried the suit which went to the Supreme Court and won Supreme Court approval of the 160-acres. The water interests successfully fought off his appointment to a higher court when Brown was governor. Have you read about that, or do you know something about that?

Nathan: Yes, a little.

Leary: He became kind of the fall guy for this, unfortunately. He's on the bench, but did not get as high an appointment as was initially sought for him.

Nathan: Well, this suggests that Brown was very strong for the 160-acre limitation in various positions. Should I assume that Knight was not particularly so?

Leary: Oh, I don't think Knight was strong for it, no. I'm not even sure that Brown was always strong for it. One of the characteristics about Brown was that he was not one to be frozen into positions that lasted necessarily adamantly and forever. He approached things from the point of principle, and he could feel strongly about it; but he also could be persuaded, when he heard somebody else, to see it in a different way.

I think he felt pretty convinced about and backed his team that had worked on the 160-acre thing, and he recognized it as a Democratic party issue also, to which he should remain loyal. On the other hand, I would suspect that he caved in a bit to pressure on appointments of--well, actually, I think that it may not have been in his hands, but I think he could have resisted and insisted on Abbott Goldberg getting the appointment. But he would sometimes cave in to pressure on things, the compromise that makes for politics.

I sometimes, in watching Jerry Brown, sense that he is trying to be quite different from his father in seeming inflexible about things or in seeming unapproachable by special interests. But he also is learning that some accommodations must be made, because Jerry Brown initially had a lot of speeches in about the second year of his first term in favor of 160-acres. He championed it and assigned people on his staff to do some research on it and got a lot of young people very excited about it, and paid absolutely no more attention to it, and has now, I think, endorsed or spoken favorably about the modification of 160-acre proposals that are in Washington currently.

Leary: So, when his father, Pat Brown, used to draw criticism a good deal for being persuadable on points, his son is finding out that sometimes it's politically necessary. And I guess that's the way the ball bounces in politics. It's very hard to take an idealistic position and just hang in there with it; or if you do it, you should take it on just one or two, I guess, and make that be critical, and then hold your friends with all the other issues.

But, at any rate, Pat was often scorned by sort of slick professional politicians--I always felt that he was by Kennedy, for instance--as naive and bumbling. But, as a matter of fact, he was a very good politician because he was open to and available to hear from a lot of people, and he had a staff that he trusted, and he worked pretty well, actually. And, of course, in defeating Nixon, he kind of showed political strength.

VII ENERGY AND ECONOMICS

[Interview 6: July 27, 1979]##

Nathan: We were talking about your interest in energy; did you want to talk about the conference in Colorado as a start?

Leary: Well, it fits in a little bit with some notes that you had made about our previous discussion, because you were talking about the oil companies' activities with respect to gas taxes. I guess we did quite a bit of that. And you asked if I was interested in energy problems, if I'd always been.

Natural Resources, Wealth, and Politics

Leary: Well, they're so closely related to wealth and to natural resources and to the influence that wealth puts into politics, that it's impossible, when you begin writing about politics, not to be very aware of energy as a critical element in the political scene.

Even in the days when Samish and the liquor lobby were generally popularly assumed to be (and to a great extent were) the dominant influence in the legislature and so forth, the big factor one became aware of, the big element that was important in the state, was gasoline, oil. And they reached out through the truckers and through the banks and through agriculture because they had to have things shipped, and oil involved all these different kinds of pressure groups or interest groups. The utilities, too, were an energy area heavily involved in politics, protecting their self-interest.

So, yes, I was always interested in it. But now it really seems to me that we're on the verge of a new kind of an era; whatever happens to President Carter's big synfuel push, we'll

Leary: have the development of western states' coal reserves and the press for geothermal and solar and wind power in California, since we don't have any coal. Then there is the use of California as a port for whatever we can get down from Alaska further in; perhaps an oil terminal, which is still a controversial matter, and perhaps a coal terminal someday if they do a lot of coal development in Alaska. Alaska has good coal fields that are right close to Cook Inlet and easy to reach by boat, and that presents a possibility for shipments down here.

We see PG&E at this point going off to Utah to buy coal, planning its next start-from-scratch utility plant to be a coal-fired one; if we don't have coal in California, at least we're going to have to use it in some form or another. I think all the utilities would prefer using natural gas if they can, and they'll do everything they can to get from Mexico and Canada the gas that is available.

Western States as a Political Bloc

Leary: But this whole concentration on natural resources that are in the West and are on western lands, a lot of it in the Rocky Mountain states, suggests new changes coming in politics, both on the national scene and in the states. I think there is going to be a lot of concern in the East about the West now, more than there has been, especially the Rocky Mountain states. There's already the beginning of this struggle to see whether the Rocky Mountain states can mount any kind of a political bloc where they can have some say in Washington about getting some of the money for development assigned to environmental protection and community impact offset, that sort of thing. That's in their minds, plus a hope that instead of having a crash program of development, they can get sort of what they called phased development.

Now, maybe it's unfair of me to get into this right now, because it just happens to be a current news interest.

Nathan: No, it relates, as you say, to the whole era we were talking about.

Leary: Well, energy has always been very critical to politics. Perhaps I'm inaccurate to anticipate it will become more so. The Mid East oil crisis makes us very sensitive to oil issues just now, but all through history I guess energy issues mingled with politics. But now the national reliance on the western states is going to mean quite a bit. It'll be interesting to see how much of a coalition

Leary: the Rocky Mountain states can make with California to get California's votes, you know. I don't see how they can have much strength in Washington without getting California committed to their own interests. And the environmentalists in California, I think, will rally to them, so there will be some.

Reporters' Attitudes and Economics

Leary: How this goes back now to Goodie Knight and Brown, I'm not sure. But I never knew closely the ins and outs of what the oil companies wanted. I wish that I'd spent some time getting a little bit acquainted with some of the lobbyists and finding out what they were really trying to do.

In the legislature, as a reporter in that era, there was always such a desire to stay independent, not to form any close personal friendly relationships with news sources so that you would begin to peddle their propaganda. You wanted to look at them very coldly.

Well, the result really was that we didn't know enough about them, didn't know enough of what they were doing and what they were really trying to get across and where their interests lay. I sort of feel maybe reporters know more now, as they're covering politics, about what the special interests are up to.

We had such an adversary position--which I think is correct for a reporter--that it was, I think, somewhat blinding. I mean, we were so sceptical about the industry. And then anyway, we were covering so closely just the maneuvers of bills and who was making a speech where at what committee, that we didn't get the benefit of standing back and seeing economic trends and what the big industries were doing.

I'm not sure today that the reporters covering politics have that either as much as one would ideally hope. But I think newspapers ought to have somebody on their staffs who looks at the economic mix with politics a good deal. It's always been there, but I think it's more blatant and more of a sensitive area for political reporters to cover now.

Nathan: Were you thinking both then of lobbying and campaign contributions?

Leary: Am I thinking now of that?

Nathan: As elements, perhaps, both then and now?

Leary: Right now, yes, they are. But when they give campaign contributions, and certainly through these PACs, these Political Action Committees that industries and businesses are setting up all over, they're coming to have more open and direct and traceable influence.

But I'm also thinking even a little bit broader. For instance, the oil companies now are moving into ownership of a lot of the coal, of mining stock and coal-mining companies. I think a reporter has to be sensitive to this and watch where the resource controls have kindred interests and what their long-range efforts are--for instance, I would guess, to open up federal lands for a lot of leasing. The pressure to get into federal lands is going to come through the states, with perhaps the idea that on federal lands it will be easier to circumvent state environmental regulations and so forth. And the companies will be joining with the federal government, I suspect, in wanting to make these hurried "let's-do-it-fast" decisions.

So, I'm looking at what are the business objectives and the profit objectives that are driving some of the big corporations, which come down the line to express themselves then in contributions, whom they back, and how they lobby. Well, there's more of an awareness of this now than there was when I was reporting up at Sacramento; that's for sure. I think there needs to be even more.

A paper like the Los Angeles Times, though, does have reporters writing on this level. I'm not sure the state reporters are looking at it as carefully as maybe the Washington ones.

But these resource interests, just like the banks and so forth--it's a funny thing about power. I mean, it's interesting to think in terms of where power lodges politically. But, really, an awful lot of it lies with the money interests that are involved in these big industries--aerospace here; that's a manufacturing one, of course.

The newspapers write a great deal about media and image and television and the glib little superficial part of the politician that comes through, as though this were central, and maybe that is central to how they get elected. But when they're in office, when the campaigning is over, then I think the big interests move in, and you begin to see even people who started out as sort of liberal candidates backing away from positions because they begin to hear about where the state's economic interests lie and don't want to upset the applecart.

Nathan: Well, this raises a couple of very interesting questions. Let's go back just a moment to your remark that you felt an adversary relationship was appropriate between reporters and, in this case, the business interests that they're covering. Would you say that an adversary position is correct for a reporter in anything that he or she is covering?

Leary: Almost.

Nathan: That is, the government, the arts, whatever?

Leary: Yes, almost, except that it tends sometimes to block your vision of a positive case.

Nathan: Maybe detachment--

Leary: Detachment might be--yes. "Adversary" to me suggests a challenge always, that that is what you're bringing in, questioning and not taking things at face value and trying to look behind and trying to see what had made this thing happen up 'til now. But sometimes journalism gets to be so deliberately, aggressively adversary that it is more involved in the game of combativeness than it is in trying to get at facts.

My own feeling is that in some of my reporting I was so stand-offish and so maybe hostile too and sceptical about the influence of special interests on the legislature that I did not see what, well, the milk industry does, what a big part of agriculture that really does represent, and who was it that they were speaking for. I don't mean that the milk industry should have had a freer hand in getting the price adjustments that they wanted or something like that. But I think my own reporting was superficial because I would report about a half-a-cent increase or something like that and spend quite a lot of time about the speechmakers who were saying, "This is going to gouge the poor," without sufficiently looking at the problems of the dairy herds, the dairy people at that time, and what they were paying for feed, and that kind of thing.

So that I think maybe I'm just wishing I'd had more economics background. That's probably what it amounts to.

Nathan: That's interesting.

Leary: I may have mentioned--maybe I didn't, but it struck me, when I was at Harvard in relation to the Nieman group coming in this year, that almost every reporter seeking a year to study at Harvard wanted a background in economics, and expressed their great need for it.

Leary: This suggests, I think, something that's happening in relation to politics. It's certainly always been there, but it is now a more blatant play of the business forces and economic interests into the political arena.

I was talking to some of the Graduate School of Business people at Stanford who were suggesting that the business world and the political world are on a convergence course.

Nathan: Not as adversaries?

Leary: No, no. That within the next twenty-five years or so you'll hardly be able to tell the politician apart from the businessman because their interests will be so in unison, which has all kinds of implications for the future.

Nathan: Is this good or bad?

Leary: They are not concerned about that. They just are positing it, that it's inevitable, that it's what's happening. But what that suggests is that the business interests, economic interests, are so intimately wrapped up in what governmental decisions are; and it suggests less and less of this so-called free enterprise and more and more intertwining of capitalistic objectives with bureaucratic rulings, so that maybe the time will come when you won't be able to tell them apart. But I don't foresee us having democratic elections for the head of Standard Oil or something like that. I don't think that'll come about! Anyway, I got a little bit far afield.

East v. West?

Nathan: Well, your focus on how power arises and how it is parcelled out-- that is, who has what share and uses it in what way--made me wonder whether you thought perhaps the far western states in this energy question would make common cause with the Rocky Mountain states. That is, not only California, but the rest of the West. Does that seem likely?

Leary: Well, I think it's inevitable. I think there's, for one thing, the large percentage of federally held land that we share with Alaska, Washington, and Oregon. And that's going to emerge, I think, as a big problem among all the western states, and I think we will get involved in it.

Nathan: Is this a regional--I don't like to say the word "conflict" necessarily, but is it some sort of a regional squaring-off, or is it the West against, let's say, the federal government? Does this relate to your interest in constitutional relationships?

Leary: Well, I think it's that, to some extent. But I believe that, in a sense, it's the West against the East. I see the whole put-down that the media give Jerry Brown totally from the East as a part of an eastern attitude that they have: "Whatever California is, California is a little bit kooky, and Brown represents that, and that's not good, stable America." And I have a sense that there is a kind of an alarm--I'm looking at this now from the eastern point of view--a regional animosity toward the West.

Maybe it's jealousy a little bit, because they think it's escaped a lot of eastern problems. Our cities aren't as old and beat down, and our cities are still growing, and theirs are not. Part of it is a kind of cultural thing where they think California is still this place where you can live in sunshine all the time, and wear funny clothes, and don't have to work very hard, and that sort of thing, whereas they're the embodiment of all the American virtues of hard work and diligence and sober living. An awful lot of people feel that, I think, in the East, and you hear it.

So, regionalism--there are sub-regions within this, but there always has been, I think, a kind of an eastern scepticism about the West, along with a glamorization of it. I suspect that it's tending now to become a little bit more aggravated hostility, maybe a little bit of it because of the person of Jerry Brown as an embodiment of California.

Nathan: Did they see this in Reagan also?

Leary: No, because Reagan is talking the conservative, careful, good sense, American virtues thing--hard work and all this kind of thing. He may have come out of Hollywood. He may be a part of California in his own life, but his line is consistent with what the eastern establishment figures is appropriate, I think. So, I don't believe that Reagan embodied that, nor did Nixon. But somehow or other, I think it all kind of comes together in Jerry Brown's image.

Nathan: That's interesting. I don't think I've heard anyone else say this.

Leary: Well, I've been trying to think about what Brown is and what he offers. To a Californian--one gets so annoyed with him for not being consistent about programs and positions. He was an

Leary: environmentalist, and he had a very good position on nuclear energy and on the benign energy sources, and I think he didn't handle it very well to capitalize on it as he might have. But then he gets into the budget balancing thing too.

Nathan: And being hospitable to business.

Leary: Yes.

Nathan: Without much care in delineating that?

Leary: Yes, exactly. So, he loses credibility from one side to the other side. But Lou Harris said last night on public television that he thought Brown had already bombed out, and I think that's an over-anticipation. But, now, that, I believe, expresses a kind of eastern hope or expectation.

Nathan: I see.

Leary: That's not a way a pollster should be--they shouldn't be expressing hope; they should be expressing solid opinion. But it emerges out of conversations as well as interviews and so forth. Maybe we've roamed too far from the period that you're interested in.

Recognizing a Region

Nathan: Well, it enriches the whole area. But I might ask you a little more. Well, perhaps this is related to the energy question too, when we were thinking of the regional developments that you became deeply interested in late in the '50s and early '60s.

Leary: Yes.

Nathan: Perhaps thinking of, let's say, the development of BART as being an alternative to more highways and freeways, which the first Governor Brown helped to develop.

Leary: You know, there are certain sort of logical regions. The Bay Area is a region, certainly, not just defined so by federal fund allocations but by a lot of common interests and by the Bay, actually.

But for some reason which I've never fully fathomed--and maybe it has to do with voter relationships--the identification of people with a region hasn't happened, I think. Assemblyman Knox from Richmond--maybe we mentioned this--who's quitting, retiring now, has been the champion of regional government for ten or fifteen years.

Nathan: At least.

Leary: He's been trying to establish some level of regional decision-making that would be an actual government and not these sort of extra-governmental agencies. And it has not taken off; it hasn't succeeded. The self-interests of the different communities have combatted it, I suppose.

But there's some element of identification for the voter, I think also, that doesn't quite get through. Now, we are voting for BART representatives, but on a kind of local basis, a county basis.

Nathan: Let's see. What else do we vote for? We vote for regional park directors.

Leary: Regional parks. But, again, that's East Bay, so that the two counties, Contra Costa and Alameda, join in that.

Maybe ultimately BART--maybe transportation may be the thing that will establish more regional thinking. We talked about the formation of ABAG, involving representation from the surrounding nine counties and from cities within them. MTC (Metropolitan Transportation Commission) followed after, fashioned along the same general pattern of representation, founded locally to receive federal transportation planning money--to do the plan and then to implement it. Its office has been next door to the ABAG office at the Claremont Hotel. It was established by the legislature in 1970 as a Bay Area structure to advance further the steps taken with ABAG and with BART--to permit a broader approach to regional transportation without becoming that controversial structure, an "Authority." It can receive funds but cannot generate funds and it is not structured with so much autonomy it can be independent of local cities and counties. How successful it will be I don't yet know--in moving transit ahead in this region. But it really came about because federal legislation required some regional body to receive federal planning and transit monies. Or at least that's my understanding of it. It does include a representative of the U.S. Department of Transportation on its membership, but otherwise it includes local officials, as ABAG does. Now, if we are in for, and I hope we are, a really large amount of money to help the local transit as well as BART, maybe this metropolitan sense will grow with people and MTC will begin to be an entity that they'll recognize.

But there's something elusive missing that does not form a region here, even though business has formed the Bay Area Council, which is an effective communication link anyway for business. They can get together on things that they're interested in. For instance, I think they're instrumental now in this quite interesting discussion about flex-time.

Nathan: Yes.

Leary: And there is an area where, in a region, businesses can work on something--again, having to do with transportation--which they see as a regional problem and know how to get together on.

Nathan: Do you feel that there is any hostility at the state level, either in the legislature or elsewhere, to another layer of administration or of government?

Leary: Oh, I think there's a lot of it, yes.

Nathan: And, let's say, suppose you are a charismatic person in the regional transportation area, would you then possibly be a challenge to an assemblyman or a senator?

Leary: Yes, that's true. But I think Proposition 13 did it in even more, because the thought about distribution of money now from the state into local hands--they just want nobody else at that pork barrel.

Nathan: Very interesting.

Leary: Don't you think that's probably logical that this has hurt the possibility of another regional try?

Nathan: Yes.

Leary: Of course, another subtle thing that hurt it was this line that was peddled that this was moving government away from local control and [that it was] a thoroughly evil communistic kind of plot, the funny thing being that Mr. Jarvis has done more to move government away from local control than anybody else.

Nathan: Yes, exactly.

Leary: Right out of the apartment house owners and real estate people.

Nathan: Right. And at the state level, of course, the Bay Area is no match for the numbers of southern California voters.

Leary: No. Regionalism is interesting, though, in a national framework because I keep hearing that Washington politics is dealing more and more in terms of regions.

Nathan: Right. That's where the spigot is. You go through that pipeline to get your money.

Leary: Yes. And although I haven't looked into this as much as I mean to, I get the impression that this is sort of having an effect on states' relationships and may in the long run mean quite a change in the strength of states.

It's kind of interesting, because in World War II the states had a sufficiently vigorous lobby and voice in Washington to insist that nearly all--well, I guess, all--of the government-controlled programs over allocations of fuel and food stamps and the rest of it, whatever was rationed and under government allocation such as gasoline, the programs were structured to flow through the states. They were not allocated to cities or to regions but to states, and the state handled the local distribution. It reinforced the political strength of state government. But now, states are omitted in grants to cities, and in the evolution of regional approaches to federal-local relationship.

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Leary: Well, the regional interest in the allocation of funds and the approach toward programs may, in a way, undermine the political power of states. They may begin to have a lot of decisions done around the federal regions, and I see this as an interesting thing to observe. I don't know what's going to come of it.

Meanwhile, however, states find themselves reinforcing their own strength by uniting in approaches. Probably we're in for a time of very strong western state unity over energy questions, and I can't see how the coastal states can resist joining with the mountain states. I think they will. They aren't right at the moment, but I think they will become closer. So, that's one direction.

Nathan: Right. May I just pick up on a few things that we had talked about briefly?

Leary: Yes, indeed.

The Savings and Loan Phenomenon

Nathan: We were speaking a while back about Pat Brown's running for re-election, I guess, in 1962, and the issue of receiving funds from savings and loan companies.

Leary: Yes.

Nathan: And the name of Frank Macken came up in that connection?

Leary: Frank Macken was the man who had been in the attorney general's office as an assistant, and he was a Los Angeles lawyer whom Pat had come to know, I guess, through Democratic party politics, though I'm not even positive that he's a Democrat. He could possibly be a Republican. But he was someone who had worked in the attorney general's office and had Pat's complete confidence, and so Pat named him to head the savings and loan...

Nathan: That is the Department of Savings and Loan?

Leary: Yes. It was at the period of the very rapid growth of savings and loan companies, when this was kind of a phenomenon of the West--that was where the money was being funneled into a great deal of housing development and this kind of thing, and provided a way around banks. Savings and loan associations grew much faster here than in the East. I don't know. Maybe banks were a little bit stodgy in their lending policies or something like that, and people saw opportunities for this, and I suppose that would be in interest rates and gimmicks to attract money. Certainly what they did was put out immense promotion to invite investments.

I wish I knew more about what really was going on then, except that in this rapid growth the industry clearly wanted to keep state regulations minimal. They did not want a lot of state agencies looking over their shoulders, and they had a lot of money. I mean, their profits were just huge through this period in the early '60s, from the mid-'50s on.

So, I know that Governor Brown--or even before he was governor, when he was attorney general--was very apprehensive about their feeling that they could get control of his administration by extra large donations, and he was watching to be sure that they did not accept too much money from them. He was wanting somebody whom he could have absolute trust in to be in charge of them, to keep an eye on them to see what they were trying to get and how much they could be allowed to get away with without stealing the store too.

I don't know what laws they wanted and what they did get, but I know that that was an area where a new source of money emerged into the political field. It was kind of interesting.

Nathan: And a nice parallel to your remark about the increasing influence of business and industry. This would then be financial, financial industry, if you want to call it that.

Labor's Changing Influence

Leary: Indeed, yes. And closely allied with construction people and labor interests, because they're united in wanting the housing boom to go on.

Nathan: What do you think is going to happen to the labor interests? Now, I know you've watched the development of labor activities.

Leary: I'm puzzled and dismayed and bewildered. Labor's strength seems to be in the public employees. That's not quite true, of course, because labor still is strong in the construction industry. It's still strong in California.

Nathan: In transportation too?

Leary: Yes, and in transportation.

Nathan: The Teamsters?

Leary: Yes. But it has lost political clout, or appears to have, and maybe its national leadership hasn't got it. I don't know.

William Winpisinger of the International Association of Machinists is trying to lead--maybe the push to Kennedy--but is trying to push the Democratic party into more liberal positions. I've been thinking their union strength is sure to be hurt as the auto industry declines. Now, I don't think we're going to quit having automobiles, but the growth in that industry and the growth of jobs in it are over; that's for sure. And there will be some very important and maybe subtle changes in the power that the United Auto Workers can assert. Maybe the miners are going to come back. We'll have--

Nathan: A new John L. Lewis!

Leary: Yes, we may have a new John L. Lewis coming along, because that is an area where labor strength is accepted and recognized, and they're going to come in wanting safety protections and things of this kind, probably combatting the environmentalists to some extent too on where the money should go. They'll want money in safety devices instead of covering up the strip mining and so forth.

But in California today I am convinced that a lot of Brown's strength, like his father's, really is through organized labor still. These are the people who look at where else do we go, when it comes down to voting or to contributing. And I think labor

Leary: still stands with Brown. Now, Brown against Carter--I don't know. I don't know. Labor in California is a bit turned off on Brown, and I'm not sure. They haven't come to that decision yet; they're going to be watching.

But labor as a strong force in California--it remains to be seen what happens next. If a Mike Curb succeeds or becomes elected as governor in three years, labor will have a hard time getting anything at all. That might be good for them. They may then pull together a little bit better and work more diligently on politics.

There's a bad effect--a sort of a whiplash effect, I guess--on all the labor movement in the public mind, I think, in the reaction voters have against police strikes and against all of the demonstrations and demands for pay increases from public employees. And my impression is that action in California on the labor front is going to be in the public employees' sector most notably and that the public will resent it.

Nathan: Does that suggest binding arbitration as the alternative to strikes?

Leary: Something along that nature is bound to come.

Nathan: The problem of budgeting--

Leary: Yes. It is so real, yes. On the other hand, the voters look at the public employee as having job security and a cushy job and do not think they work very hard. We're probably going through a kind of a shakedown period with Prop 13 which is forcing a lot of hard work. I mean, I think maybe we are going to get a more diligent work force out of government employees because of it. And certainly up until right now they have been way behind private enterprise in their pay. So, there is some justification for their yelps.

But the public doesn't see that. The public sees themselves as paying the bill and resents it and doesn't have much sympathy for them. They need an image-maker on their own behalf.

Nathan: Right. Do you see anyone on the labor horizon who can tackle this very tough problem of seniority and "last hired, first fired," so that the minority people seem to be en masse at a great hazard?

Leary: No, nor even particularly interested in it.

Nathan: That's interesting.

Leary: I mean, the bulk of the workers, the majority, are still the white workers who were in early and have the longest service.

Leary: Well, then a whole other problem that they have is the cost of pensions, which keeps getting worse and worse and is driving so many government units now to hire part-time people or temporary people, avoiding the pension obligation. I see some now willing to pay health benefits for temporary employees, but they're still able to dodge the pension responsibility.

Apparently the pension responsibilities for all state employees plus the teachers are just growing very fast and are going to be a very serious problem if the economy doesn't continue yielding all these billions that we have been accustomed to. When people begin to see what the pension costs are for policemen and firemen and so forth, the resentment against paying that (rather than current services) is, I think, going to continue to aggravate the citizen resentment against the public employee as a labor member. So, I think they're going to have a tough time, labor is, keeping public sympathy, even though there's a lot of them.

Nathan: And even though, I suppose, their endorsement politically still carries a certain weight.

Leary: Well, not so much maybe their endorsement--their money, their contributions. Their contributions can come through. There's one place where they can really come through. Of course, maybe they're not as important now as rock musicians are.

VIII POLITICAL PARTIES AND PERSONALITIES

Nathan: Well, as labor seems to be more beleaguered and, let's say, the business-industry segment becomes closer to government, is there a countervailing force?

Leary: Well, one wonders whether party might someday--

Nathan: You think the parties might revive, if that's the right word?

Leary: They'd have to be reconstituted, I think--start all over again.

Nathan: What would you imagine as the party alignments?

Leary: Well, I'm thinking of--will a liberal Democratic party come forward? If we have a very bad recession, I don't understand the economics of how we would pull ourselves out of it, if we have both inflation and recession at the same time. But if we go through a very bad year, as a lot of people are expecting, I would assume that by next November there will be much more interest and sympathy for government programs of support and help than there have been in the past couple of years with the general public. And maybe this will give encouragement to forming parties around platform again.

Nathan: You feel we don't have that now?

Leary: I really don't, no.

Well, politics has taken this strong personal turn, which used to be called the California style too, and I don't know how much it is. I got to thinking, as I looked over some of the notes, about what we mean by leadership and what people look for in leaders. This is currently getting kind of serious consideration at a lot of levels, I think, not just the question of what kind of leadership Carter gives and what kind of leadership Brown embodies. But, I

Leary: think, with a lack of party identification with platform or policies where people kind of felt they knew what it stood for, there is much more examination of what kind of leadership are we developing, and what do we want of it.

Media Influence

Leary: And then also the impact of television and of the media generally. Media always has influenced politics and always steered it by the communications system that prevailed. But, to me, one of the strange things that's happened in the long period I've been looking at the political scene is the emergence of what we thought of as simply a system for trying to get at the truth of what was really happening--news reports--simply to convey to the reader the best we could of what we could make out of both the pressure groups, interest groups, and the politicians and their interplay.

Now, suddenly, media's role becomes part of the game, sort of. It was part before. It was, when you thought, as Mr. Halberstam has been telling, about how much the newspapers influenced behind the scenes in the decisions of who would run and who they were going to back, which was critical. I have known times when, for instance, the Examiner would not carry the names of some candidates, so that that pretty much blocked them out.

But today it's quite different, the role that media is playing. It isn't simply a matter of whether the editorial backing goes to So-and-So. It's a sense that in this kind of entertainment arena, if media will involve itself in giving somebody a play and in showing an attractive side of their personality and in giving them television exposure and depicting them as amusing or charming or attractive or bright or engaging, or, on the other hand, depicting unflattering aspects as they seem to be about President Carter, constantly emphasizing and reinforcing each other in the emphasis of the criticism, there is a new role being played here in the game of politics, or at least it seems so to me. The media is a force in the operation of the political system, quite different from what it used to be. I hesitate to feel that it's a good force.

On the other hand, by trying to look at issues and educate people on issues, we certainly have more serious news reports in the printed press than we used to have. Almost a deliberate counter to television is this effort of the printed press to give more backgrounders and in-depth things and go the magazine way.

Leary: So, I have to concede that while television particularly as a medium that participates in the political game and some columnists and some reporters become participants too, other reporters in the printed press are giving the voters some really good backgrounders on political issues. So, maybe I'm contradicting myself in what's happening.

Nathan: Both things seem to be happening.

Leary: This element of the media as an influence not just in the selection of candidates, but an influence on what voters think, is kind of interesting.

Nathan: How do the media get similar signals? You're saying that their representation of President Carter as inept or whatever reinforces each other. How does it happen that there is not more diversity in this view?

Leary: Oh, there's a pack psychology in this whole game. You know, the boys on the bus; they're going through the same experience.

It actually is a quite interesting thing that Carter's doing by trying to circumvent the Washington press by getting out into the country deliberately, recognizing that the Washington press will follow along, but he thinks maybe he can reach through them to others and get something across. It's an interesting ploy, and I think it's going to help him because he's trying to avoid this united kind of criticism.

Nathan: Right. So, you were thinking that Carter's attempt to break through that line of Washington reporters may help him.

Leary: Yes, I think it might make--I'm not sure that it's going to make that much difference because there is such a lack of confidence in him. But the expectation of what a president will be and do is so colored by the way the reporters write about him.

I noticed somebody--maybe Kraft, or one of the columnists--did a surprise column the other day about: it is possible for Carter to do something right. And he wrote about the import-export bill, or the trade relations.

Nathan: The trade relations, yes.

Leary: Yes. I thought, "That's kind of remarkable! It's a long time since anybody has taken this line."

Leary: They do feed on each other. Somebody with a big name comes out with a point of view, and it is plausible and interesting, and they begin to see how to develop it, and so forth. I don't mean that they deliberately fake something. I think they get an impression, and it spreads. We see it ourselves; it's a human reaction. If somebody defines something, especially if it's written, why, it must be real, and it gains credibility.

Leadership and the New Journalism

Nathan: Did this happen when you were writing political news from Sacramento?

Leary: Yes, but I believe that there was more control on the part of the politicians themselves of what came out. I don't believe that the interpretive criticism or this kind of impression writing and value-judgment writing--

Nathan: Sort of the new journalism?

Leary: Yes. It was not as strong, and the result was that the politician got his point of view across more. And maybe this is a little part of this intervention that media is asserting now--you have to filter through their interpretive sieve.

Going back to the leadership thing, I was wondering if it wasn't easier in a day when Earl Warren, for instance, had a press conference, and with maybe fifteen people around, and there would be some variety in the leads of those stories. A few people would write about what maybe their own local community was most interested in out of that whole press conference.

But often, as the crowd of the journalists walked away, there would be a little, "Well, did you think his saying this was important?" And somebody else would say, "Well, I'm going to leave that alone because I'm not interested in that, and I think I'm going to talk about this." And they're beginning already to influence each other's judgment, and that would happen.

Part of it is a normal wanting to sound out your own hunch about something. Being a reporter is not quite as solitary a thing as the public generally assumes it to be. You look at something--it takes you a long time before you begin to trust your own judgment of what's news, and sometimes you're wrong even then.

Leary: But especially in the political world where you're constantly thinking, "How do you size this up?" and "What'll it do to him?", the older more seasoned veterans always were the ones who could kind of shape what was going to be at least the lead material, the major thrust of the news.

Now, there were, as I say, far less interpretive things. Pete Phillips of the Bee at that time--Herbert Phillips was his by-line, but he was called Pete all the time--who had been writing about as long as Squire Behrens for the Chronicle, had leeway to write a somewhat interpretive piece on the editorial page. And he was not as bound by the paper's, the Bee's, approach toward coverage, to give day-to-day coverage, because they had a huge staff; they were doing this blanketing of news, of the state coverage. So, he could stand back and interpret a little bit more. Much more of that goes on now in almost everybody's story, and then sometimes they're labeled "analysis," and sometimes they're not, and they're just as much analytical.

But in those days, clearly, the man who had something to say had a better shot at getting it out to the public without the prism affecting it as it went through the media first.

Now, you'd think, "How could he possibly have as good a shot as, for instance, Carter before the television camera, or Jerry Brown?" No, they can convey there in television what they want, but then so many of these sort of peripheral things of how they look and how their voice comes across--

Nathan: And some people just don't have it in front of the camera.

Leary: No, exactly. Yes. Clearly, Carter's been coached, you know, to use his gestures as a fist now instead of an open hand, and to not smile, and to be firm in his delivery, and to see if that won't make a difference. I'm inclined to think maybe it will make a difference--maybe not enough, but it'll make some.

Nathan: What if you were a reporter who took part in this give and take, trying to talk to each other about what was significant, and suppose you simply had your own view, and you didn't go along with the boys in the bus, or you didn't go along with Squire Behrens necessarily--would that make any difference in your relationship with your colleagues? Would it be awkward?

Leary: Yes. You have to be willing to be independent, and people are, of course. But what it would make a difference in is your relationship to your editor, because your editor's got to then have enough respect for your judgment along the line that if you're going to emphasize such-and-such, both you and he have to have confidence

Leary: that you've chosen a worthwhile lead or have made a correct decision. Now, I don't mean to suggest that the imaginative reporter isn't rewarded sometimes by seeing things in a different light or catching a nuance and playing it well. I think that editors are looking for something that is different, so that in a way you have your editor for you if he is sure you're not going to get left on misinterpreting something. And, of course, he has the wire services to back you up; he can look at their stories.

There are times, and it still happens, when a reporter will put an interpretation on a story or use a lead, pick out something as important, which none of the wires are emphasizing. And an editor will look at both AP and UPI and say, "Well, what's the matter with him?" and might even phone him and say, "How come?" Now, if the reporter says, "Look, that's old stuff. That's been around the track six times, and here's something new," it's all right if the editor agrees with him or accepts his judgment. But if it turns out that what the wires played is big news everywhere, the editor may be pretty annoyed with his political reporter. Or he may use a wire story and play the reporter's innovative approach as well.

The Entertainment Factor##

Nathan: Perhaps we can say a little more, if you wish, about the role of the press in helping to formulate these images of leadership and power that have so much to do with government.

Leary: Well, Harriet, as you know, I've been quite fascinated by television's impact. And so when you say "press"---

Nathan: I mean the media.

Leary: I came to use the word "media" more broadly. I used to hate the word, but I now recognize it as an entity and a whole process.

I sense that there has been interjected into the whole business of political reporting an entertainment factor which colors the way candidates present themselves and colors the way people perceive them and the way the media approaches delivering them.

When I was a brand new reporter, or learning to be, I was perfectly aware of an entertainment factor in presenting a news story. You had to have a catchy lead. It was one thing to say who, why, what--not why; that came later--but what, when, where, and (if you could) why. But really what you were looking for was something very catchy; and I believe we have discussed this before in one of the interviews.

Leary: Now it isn't just a matter of catching attention and trying to draw the reader in until he'll get the general idea and follow you, you hope, to the meat of it, or the effort to be a sufficiently good writer to draw them in, or to have sufficiently interesting facts. But now I think it's a little bit fun and games that has thrust itself into the whole area of political reporting.

Jerry Brown knows how to use that and has sort of perfected it, and I think he will keep himself alive politically by an adroit use of his television appearance. Brown is able to talk intelligently and vividly about interesting and rather deep things. But he also knows how to make bright little quips or to set something which has a catchy kind of show biz look to it that, I think, attracts attention.

There are a lot of people who say, "Why complain about the entertainment factor in news reporting? You at least are getting more news across to a broader segment of the public than ever before. If you have to jazz it up, okay. You're at least educating more, because in the days of only the written press, a large number of people simply didn't read it and certainly didn't read about politics."

And there is some validity to that. There is some validity to the fact that if you get them watching and keep the programs short, at least they're getting some idea. I say that, even though I get infuriated that public television is so brief, their newscasts. The program's improved, but still you'd like it to go longer once in a while on something.

Entertainers as Fund-Raisers

Leary: There's another element of show business. It's kind of interesting how much people out of the entertainment world are getting into politics. Mike Curb is another example. And in fund raising, you look at Tom Hayden and Jane Fonda, whom I'm assuming Brown tries to keep connected with because there's another source of funds and an entree into the whole general entertainment world; and Helen Reddy, who has given lots of money to him.

I was talking to some of the people in his present fund-raising drive--Tony Dougherty, who used to be his legislative liaison and who's been out separated from the government, working for the Brown campaign committee to try to overcome the debts that they had left

Leary: over, and who will be a key factor in the new Brown-for-President drive. He was telling me where some of the sources of their money were coming from. I would say, "Would you spell that?" And he said, "That's just another rock group. Ask your kids. They'll know who they are!"

But I mention this because apparently one of the big sources for money now, entertainment benefit things, are not under the limitation of the contribution law.

Nathan: I see!

Leary: And so you can get large amounts of money through that source which you might not get otherwise. You can't get them through single individual contributions. So, this puts a premium on the support that you get from entertainers.

Nathan: There's your countervailing force, the entertainment industry!

Leary: Yes!

Nathan: Fascinating!

Leary: It is interesting. It's bound to have some kind of an effect. As we have political rallies and television things more and more, there's going to be more rock groups and this kind of thing. And it will be interesting to see what happens.

Nathan: Yes.

Leary: Now, one interesting thing is that as Hollywood continues to be a center for television and musical groups and so forth and for record production as well as films, it makes California a little bit more important in a new way in the campaign management/campaign funding area. So, we'll see where that goes.

Nathan: Is this a newer development? During the Knight and the Brown years, was any of this happening?

Leary: No, no. This is really new. George Murphy, I guess, our esteemed--

Nathan: Yes! I had forgotten George Murphy.

Leary: Yes, [dryly] our great senator was, I guess, maybe the first of this.

Nathan: Yes.

Leary: And, of course, Shirley Temple Black did her bit as an ambassador to Ghana and what have you. Reagan, credited with being kind of the first of it, really was just following a line.

Keeping in Touch with California Interests

Leary: There was one question or a couple of questions that you had asked me. One of them goes back to the Max Rafferty time. In thinking about Max Rafferty, I was thinking about the Tommy Kuchel race and his defeat, which kind of ended a Republican era. And I think maybe that has something to do with leadership, because that was an older style of leadership. One relationship to a newspaper that was important to him--he was the first public official to speak out against the Birch Society, and the Santa Barbara Press-Democrat (Tom Storke was the aging editor) picked that up and carried a campaign for which, I think, he ultimately got a Pulitzer.

Nathan: Yes.

Leary: But it was in tandem with Tommy Kuchel's insistence that this was a danger to our political system, that these extremists should not be encouraged. There was a general feeling that what he was talking about were just absolute kooks.

Well, actually, the conservative wave was much stronger than any of us recognized at that time, I think, but I can remember his talking about his alarm about this and my thinking that he had picked this up simply as a campaign gimmick. But I came to see that, no, this was something that had great substance, and his alarms were correct.

He probably has led a more comfortable life and made a lot more money since being out of the Senate.

Nathan: How did you judge him as a Senator?

Leary: I thought he was a good Senator. I thought he was very responsible and very responsive to, of course, the California interests. But I thought he was a part of that liberal Republican group that Warren at his best represented, and completely concerned with humanitarian things, and very eager to be a constructive man. I was very high on him. He kept close to labor because, of course, he recognized that that was part of California that he had to be in relationship to. And I think he had a good balance.

Leary: Now, this kind of leadership established working relationships, which I think Cranston does, with the dominant interests that are trying to make the state's economy go and balances that against whatever philosophy he also is trying to be fair to. I think it was Kuchel who used to say that a senator spends his first two years being a statesman, and his second two years being a pragmatist, and his last two years--I'm not sure how far he went in saying the last two years--but when you came back close to election time, you had to abandon some of those high ideals of the first two years to try to make sure you were going to get votes.

But that's the art of politics and of being in touch with the interests, being wary of what it is they want, and making some kind of a sensible trade-off. That goes on still; I mean, with Brown, sure. But there is kind of a posturing for the media which may have absolutely nothing to do with what really has to be dealt with in realities. I'm thinking, for instance, about how Brown takes a public position on the death penalty or takes a public position on 160 acres, but when it comes to the pinch doesn't follow through, and adjusts to the big pressures.

I have a feeling that they were playing to the public, of course, but that Warren and Kuchel in their understanding of leadership were purposely more forthright, and so the public had a little better measure of the man than they get today. I think today they don't know what they're getting, because they're getting a television image, and they're willing to buy the television image, unfortunately. It's the media-hype kind of "newcomer going to conquer Washington" that Carter was, and the "brilliant thinker ahead about all of our environmental and resource problems" that Jerry Brown can peddle, and it's a new style of leadership. I have a lot of doubt about it being as honest a leadership as we need, and I think maybe part of the reason people have lost confidence is because they don't feel they're getting a true measure of the candidate before them, and I think they want something better.

Nathan: They might conceivably respond to something that was less glossy and less hype and more real, do you think?

Leary: Maybe. I'd like to think so. We'll see.

Women in the Political Process

Nathan: You were speaking a little earlier about the other part of the equation of leadership, and that is who follows and who knows how to follow. You were thinking of, let's say, some educated women in an earlier generation who formed little study groups and who tried to inform themselves. Do you think those--

Leary: Well, we were talking about the emergence of women as a part of the--

Nathan: As a part of the electorate, I suppose?

Leary: Yes, and part of, maybe, the political process too. Yes, that was back about the turn of the century, about the years 1900-1910 or something, when women began going to college a lot. Out of that period, I think, women found--wouldn't it be funny, really, if the sorority had given us, well, the real roots of the movement? Because when they got to college, sororities in those days, that far back, were congenial and properly supervised places where young ladies from nice families could house themselves, and there was the first time they came together with a number of strange people with whom they had suddenly this new experience of going to college and being away from home. And out of that, as they went back home then, they either kept alive their sorority relationships, which a lot of them did and do still to this day, or kept up with the American Association of University Women, and, of course, the League of Women Voters too.

But I know from my own family, from hearing of my mother's generation, the emergence of these study clubs, where women would meet and have book reviews and do a more serious approach toward the study of a subject than I now think the modern book review club does. The modern book review club goes to hear somebody review a book, and that's all. But they would all make individual studies of some facet of a problem and come and give perhaps a superficial report, but nevertheless they had done some individual effort at research on the French Revolution or something like that and the westward movements and various things they were trying to be in touch with. I think that gave them a sense, anyway, of coming together and off--what?--that you get strength through uniting with others, and women found that they had a lot to talk about.

And then, of course, on a little different level, in a different way, women were becoming very active in some of the social welfare programs and, maybe a bit earlier, the Settlement House movement. Some women went that line and found common cause.

Leary: But these various strands of experience, and especially the college educated woman who got herself some confidence in her own mind and judgment and independent view of things, had an effect on society. Now, how much effect they're having, I haven't any idea.

I mentioned to you that I was reading the story of Maude Gonne in Ireland, and there was a remark about how she felt that if women could only emerge as political leaders, they would make great changes in society. We see women emerging, and I'm not really sure we're seeing great changes in society. We have women mayors now, a great number of women councilmen and so forth (councilpersons); and all these idealistic views that suddenly society would be better for it, I'm not sure are coming through.

It does fascinate me to wonder what elements women do bring into the political scene that hadn't been there before. It's something I've wanted to explore. I don't know whether I will.

Nathan: Yes, wouldn't that be an interesting study.

Leary: I think it would be fascinating.

Nathan: Whether, indeed, women are people, as Alice Duerr Miller used to say.

Leary: Are they more sensitive to social issues, as men used to say? Are they more humane in their judgments about programs? Are they petty and mean more than men are? I don't know that. It's kind of interesting. It would be lots of fun if you could do a kind of big research project on that to see: What do women have in public service which is different from men's, and what do they add to men's, to the whole system? Someday!

Nathan: Right. And it would be fun also then to think of, as other groups attain access to power--

Leary: Yes. What have they added? Of course.

Change in Cultural Priorities

Nathan: Right. Minorities, disabled, whatever--you know, those who move along. What do they bring?

Leary: Well, one thing that is undoubtedly going to happen with the great increase in Mexican-Americans is that the American cultural priorities will change, I should imagine. I would assume that the Latin American interest in music and in a kind of a softer culture, gentler kinds of values, will have an effect on our New England/Anglo-Saxon deals.

Nathan: That's interesting. And this does suggest the play you mentioned, "A Cat Named Jesus," doesn't it?

Leary: Yes!

Nathan: Was this during Max Rafferty's time as superintendent of public instruction?

Leary: The woman was a San Diego, I believe, schoolteacher in kindergarten or first or second grade who wrote a play called "A Cat Named Jesus" about a girl, a daughter of a local jail warden or something, who falls for a black man who is a prisoner. Either she has a cat or he has, but the cat's name was Jesus. This was deeply offensive to a lot of people, when emphasized by Max Rafferty.

They had a hearing to challenge her teaching credentials and, I believe, did withdraw them, finding that although she had done the play [pauses]--the actual fact of what happened to her, the outcome of the thing, I'm not sure, because, of course, it was appealed. But the point was that the Board of Education and Rafferty raised the issue: Should a teacher who wrote this play with this kind of name, involving a black man and a white girl (who, I think, never got together on the same side of the bars; but it was a story of the sensitive reaction of the young girl to the plight of the black prisoner)--whether somebody who did a play of that kind on her own time was a proper person to be teaching.

Now, a lot of people raised a lot of objection to that issue, and the CTA came to her defense, and it became a great cause. But the very fact that Rafferty could make that issue so important was a symbol of how far the right-wing Bircher types made an impress on the political scene at that time, and that was during the end of the Brown period and the beginning of the Reagan period. I don't know whether this comes out of people who came into the state from other parts of the country or whether it really was part of a national change in temperament or what. Reagan certainly built his political success on appealing to this conservative wave. Somehow the School Department survived when we were able to elect Wilson Riles afterwards.

Nathan: Right.

Conservative Power and the Campuses

Leary: So, that was a sort of assertion of balance that was healthy.

Nathan: You were tracing the growth of conservative power, weren't you, over a fairly long time?

Leary: Yes.

Nathan: Through the Kuchel years, as you mentioned?

Leary: It started, of course, earlier. It started at the end of the war in the cold war period when there was so much alarm over Russia and our relations with them and whether we were having communist infiltration and so forth. I think I discussed at an earlier time the textbook flap, when everybody was worried about whether the textbooks were too sympathetic to socialism.

Nathan: Yes.

Leary: Of course, it goes back also into the Olson period and the SRA [State Relief Administration] and so forth, all of which you in other studies have gone into. But that concern had led to the very active Un-American Activities Committee in the legislature and the concern about campuses and who spoke on campuses, and was, in a way, a thread that led up to the Free Speech Movement and the rebellion of the late '60s, this whole youthful insistence on hearing whom they want and the university alarms lest they hear radicals, the administration alarms and the political wariness over having radicals speak. That sequence--

Nathan: Perhaps pressed by the Knowlands--it becomes a little complex to figure out just who was pushing whom, doesn't it?

Leary: Yes.

Nathan: But you feel that it led up to what you're thinking of as sort of a youth revolt, or is that too strong a term?

Leary: Well, these lines were there. I'm not sure that it actually led up to it, except that the question of how to let students have access to speakers had always been a hot subject, and then they had them speak outside Sather Gate.

Nathan: Yes, yes.

Leary: Which was at least a concession to free speech and so forth, and it kept the whole pot from boiling over by the fact that they could at least go outside; then anybody could talk out on the street. Then when the campus expanded, you remember, and took over the Sather Gate area, why, they lost that little platform. And, I think, quite directly that led to the student rebellion.

But always this idea of how--and I get at this thinking of the Un-American Activities Committee. The Un-American Activities Committee was very, very attuned to who appeared on campus, and who was allowed to speak, and under whose auspices did they come. Their reports were heavy on alarms about student exposure to communist influence.

Well, that has been such a sensitive area all through the history of the University of California, at least all through the modern history of it. So, your alarms of the right wing that were incubating did have some relationship to explosions on the campus, I think. They took a different turn then, and they took a turn when the Third World people came in.

Nathan: How do you feel Brown handled the pressure? That is, Pat Brown.

Leary: I think, on the whole, he wasn't afraid of this sort of thing, whereas Reagan, whether Reagan was afraid of it or not, Reagan knew that politically it was advantageous to him to take advantage of them.

Had Brown been re-elected, what would have happened? Brown in his third term would be a lot different from Brown in his first term, probably much more conservative, and probably would have come to some sort of putting the lid on, some sort of effort to control the campuses. But, on the whole, his style was open and, "Don't get so worried about it. Don't be uptight." Also, I think he had a considerable interest in young people and in what they were saying and so forth, maybe partly because he was attuned to Jerry about this time. But for all the fact that he's been criticized for being so overly flexible and responsive to the last person who talked to him, he was open.

Personalities in the East-West Strain##

Leary: I did find Pat Brown open to new ideas and responsive to them and interested in them and often excited by them, and I think he was very interested in young people.

Leary: On the other hand, I was thinking about him and thinking in terms of looking at Jerry running for the presidency now. In contrast to that, I can remember a kind of scorn that the JFK crew had for Pat Brown. There was a sense one got from Brown's allies not only that they had a difficult time keeping communications with the White House, but that the White House didn't take Pat very seriously or think they had to treat him with any particular respect.

I don't remember what dam it was, maybe Isabella or some dam that Kennedy came out to dedicate, and it was a time when the governor was there too, and there was a lot of joking about the fact that it was the longest Kennedy and Brown had been together. I got the impression that Brown's cohorts felt they were sneered at and looked down upon--not downtrodden, but looked down upon anyway--by the young group around Kennedy.

You know, they did take Hale Champion back to Washington, and there were a number of Californians who did go back, so they didn't completely write the administration off. But my impression was that it was a very uneasy kind of time personally between Pat Brown and Kennedy.

I thought of it as we were talking about young people. I think perhaps Pat felt, "Why should that young upstart be president when I'm not?" Kennedy felt that he had a background and an understanding of the world that Pat lacked. That kind of came through.

However, whatever personal roughness may have existed, I don't believe it hurt California as far as political benefits were concerned. I think that the administration was very careful to be sure that they kept in good standing with all Californians generally by keeping whatever money was coming.

One hears today a good deal that because of the friction between Jerry Brown and Carter, despite the common party which they share, as did Pat and JFK, that California doesn't get its full share of federal funding. I have had occasion to try to run that down and have found agency heads that said, "We cannot identify--we can't say that we've been denied funds. We don't feel that that's true."

On the other hand, just recently I have heard some state officials say that when they go back to Washington to ask for some support on projects and so forth, although they're greeted hospitably and so forth, they don't feel they get their fair share, and they think it arises out of the Carter/Jerry Brown animosity. That's an interesting thing. I suppose somebody will research that someday and find out.

Nathan: I was wondering as you spoke whether the JFK/Pat Brown lack of sympathy was a little more of this East/West standoff.

Leary: I think it is, yes, in the sense that we're still so isolated out here and so far from the reality, which deals with Europe and knows the old eastern bases and is tied to New York money and understands the Washington press corps. This alienation, on both sides--the alienation of the East from the West, and the West against the East--is a reality.

Part of this western movement that we were talking about earlier, and the view about our seeing whether or not all the western states will form a sort of bloc --one of the economic impacts that is likely to happen, or, I think, is already happening, is the trade from the Orient, and Mexican influence also coming up here. And, of course, Brown is trying to stress that by talking about wanting to have a unified Canadian, Californian, Mexican sort of group--well, west coast. But this is actually happening, with all of the money from Japan coming in, and from Hong Kong. Take this huge investment in Oakland in the Chinatown project, which is largely Hong Kong money.

The trade picture, I think, will begin to shift, where there will be a lot of money coming from across the Pacific, and it will make some difference in the East. Now, I don't think that's going to happen overnight.

Nathan: And, of course, China is still a very undeveloped country.

Leary: Yes. That's a long way off, at least for the time.

Nathan: But Japan, certainly.

Leary: But Japan has a lot of money and a lot of interests.

And, of course, an interesting thing--California's exports have been skyrocketing in the last year, largely aerospace and electronic equipment and agriculture.

Nathan: And agriculture?

Leary: Yes. So, we have an economic base here, which is important to it.

Now, sure, this is part of the East/West tussle. That's kind of fascinating and, I think, is in for some changes.

So, ultimately maybe it's going to require a Californian to be president--a Californian other than Nixon--before this gets corrected.

Nathan: Yes!

Leary: And, actually, you have to stop and think that Nixon had become a New Yorker, had joined the eastern establishment, before--

Nathan: That's very, very interesting.

Leary: Yes. But somebody who would run as a Californian--I don't see that man on the horizon right now. I see those who'd like to, but I don't see the man who might be elected.

The Entertainment Value of Politics

Leary: We were talking about Hollywood, and there was one thing I wanted to say.

Nathan: Yes.

Leary: I mentioned Senator Murphy as maybe the first in this kind of entertainment world influence. But I got to speculating that maybe Goodie Knight was.

Nathan: When you talked about the Dancing Bear, I wondered whether he included Knight specifically as well as California generally.

Leary: Yes.

Nathan: Why was that?

Leary: Knight came off the superior court in Los Angeles, but he came out of a lot of the Los Angeles society which is in the entertainment world. He was known to them and friendly to them and got money from them for his campaign as lieutenant governor.

He had a great sense of the entertainment value of politics; he was very witty, and he knew how to tell stories. As lieutenant governor he could not talk about serious issues because Warren wasn't trusting him enough to carry much on his behalf and kept the usual arm's length relationship that governors always do with lieutenant governors. Goodie was trying to keep himself alive politically, and so he got on this circuit of making these enormous numbers of speeches, and he was welcome as a speaker because he was a very entertaining speaker. He really had a knack for it. Now, all good politicians have to be entertaining speakers.

Nathan: Yes.

Leary: But he had it to an nth degree. He just could tell one story after another, and so maybe that entertainment factor in politics kind of goes back all the way to him.

Nathan: Interestingly, this may explain why in your cartons filed in The Bancroft there is one speech after another by Goodie as lieutenant governor and as governor; there are so many speeches that one would think he did nothing else but.

Leary: Exactly! That's fascinating. That's all he did for at least the four years, or eight. How many years was he lieutenant governor? Six years, about? Yes.

Nathan: Yes.

Jerry Brown and the Written Word

Leary: That was all he did, yes.

The interesting thing is going to be, when Jerry Brown's things are filed, the absolute paucity of material from him because, as I may have mentioned earlier, in at least his first four years he had no press releases of speeches. This is a phenomenon about him which hasn't been talked about and which fascinates me.

Nathan: What does that mean?

Leary: He would not be pinned down to the written word. Now, there is something curious about it. It began to change at the time of his campaign last year, and he now sends out press releases which do have some of his speeches.

Nathan: But does he change them when he actually delivers them?

Leary: No. [pauses] Oh, I think so. I haven't made that close a comparison. I haven't looked at that. And, actually, the material that comes through is likely to say, "This is material prepared for his speech," which lets him off the hook as to whether he actually followed it or not.

But in his first year, his address to the legislature was almost always the only thing that appeared. I remember he spoke to that Sacramento Breakfast Club. Do you remember, the businessmen's Breakfast Club?

Nathan: Yes, I do.

Leary: And I remember Rollin Post telling me that he had given an extremely good speech. It was followed by a speech at the Commonwealth Club. I got on the telephone and asked his press secretary for copies of them, complaining that they hadn't come through, getting all the stuff sent out to the press. She said they weren't written, that he just gave them off the cuff, and she said, "We never have written speeches at all."

I tried to press that to find out why. She just said, "It's his style. He just won't be bound to it." There's a freedom for himself, a flexibility, that he's enforcing with that. I think he now is bowing to the necessity of having something to hand out to the press as he travels. He will have to have a written text, or he won't get in the New York Times and so forth. So, I think he's beginning to accommodate to this expectation of the media.

But it was kind of his beginning to feel that he could dominate the media, that he would speak it; he wasn't going to cater to them by handing out something and letting them run through it and pick out what they wanted. They had to wait until he said it. It's an interesting part of this conflict between media and candidate, or the intervention process. He managed for quite a long time to get away with it, and even without it being commented on. But he won't in the national scene, I'm sure.

Nathan: Why will it be different for him then?

Leary: The need partly for the press of time; the need for big papers like the Times and the eastern press generally to have copy in hours before it actually happens, if they're going to cover it.

Nathan: Is it a function of their press runs, or what is it?

Leary: And also habit. They're used to having people give them texts, and I think Brown is going to have to accommodate himself to that. It'll be interesting to see how far he does.

Nathan: Yes.

Leary: But as far as he can get away with it, he will avoid it, I'm sure. But when he did give his address to the legislature, in which he more or less announced he was running for president--

Nathan: It was the State of the State address?

Leary: The State of the State, yes. He began talking about the balanced budget in January of this year. That was the first text that he handed out in advance; not only to have a printed text, but that he handed it out in advance to the media. And it was not the complete text, but it was the part about the balanced budget and that federal area.

Nathan: Well, as a journalist, let's say, assuming that you're covering Brown, what do you see as the trade-offs in either having a text or not having one, from your point of view?

Leary: Apart from time, apart from the advantage of having--

Nathan: It helps you write your story?

Leary: It helps you make your own evaluation of what he's saying from the printed word, so you can look for a policy development or a new phase or something that is emerging that he's trying to get through that comes through in the printed material. It may escape you if you're listening to him, because you're absorbed in the response to him. As a journalist, I like to have both, to have the printed text, to have the opportunity to go through it, see what it is and what I think is important, and then to watch how he plays it and how the audience reacts to it, because those three elements are part of what happens when he talks: what he's presented and prepared and committed himself to be willing to give, and then how he presents it, and then how it's received. So, I would like to be able to judge all of them.

Nathan: Did he ever give them out after he had spoken?

Leary: No.

Nathan: No. Not at all?

Leary: No. And did not even issue them. And so I asked why [and said,] "You must have a tape-recorder there." And they said, "Well, sometimes we tape them, and sometimes we don't." But you would think his lawyers would say, "Let's be sure to always tape to be sure we at least have the record of what he has said." And I would bet that they tape. I mean, no matter how much he's in the public arena, you still want to be able to look back at what actually did transpire.

But for some reason, this is changing now. It was part of his new approach; he was going to have a break with the old mold, and I think he abhorred the press releases and seeing all those reams of printed things go out. It was part of this youthful endeavor to do away with the red tape and clutter and bureaucratic stuff

Leary: of government, and in that I applaud him. He was going to make it nice, simple, and so forth. But, of course, now he's found that he can't do that all the time.

The preparation of a speech and the faithful following of the text is too bad lots of times because it robs the speaker and the event of the spontaneity that you want, in the sense that it comes really from him. You wonder how many speechwriters worked this thing over, whereas I will say with Brown you have a pretty strong sense that this is all Brown. Now, I think people work it over with him; but I think when it comes out, this is Brown, maybe more than Carter, although Brown will be going into the campaign with Quinn and with Maullin, who have worked with him for a long time on his speech material, so he'll have some confidence with that.

Nathan: Do you plan to follow Brown's adventures along the campaign trail?

Leary: That's going to depend on whether somebody will underwrite the travel expenses. I would like to, of course.

We got into a little bit of the comparison of Pat Brown's relationship as a California governor with the White House, because that's a very sensitive area now too. It probably always has been, to tell you the truth.

Nathan: Inevitably.

Leary: Yes. And especially in a state as big as this and as far away, so that you don't have overnight constant communication as maybe the New York relationships would be with Washington or Philadelphia.

IX CONSUMERS, WOMEN: SOME OBSERVATIONS

Tracing Consumerism

Leary: One movement that's come along, and still hasn't gotten itself fully expressed, I think--maybe it will if the cost of living continues to rocket--is the consumer movement. That has always fascinated me, Harriet, because it was there in embryo so far back in California history, not just Olson's EPIC (End Poverty in California), which really was a concept that revolved around the idea of having exchanges, if you remember, by consumer groups, the marketing and the shopping exchanges, a vast array of cooperatives.

But I've always been interested in how many cooperatives emerged as very early town formations in California. And some of the early southern California communities began as sort of little ideal villages that people came together to run as cooperatives. You've read about this probably much more than I.

Nathan: Very little, really.

Leary: Well, there is a really strong history of this way back in California, overwhelmed as big management got into agriculture--big ownership and big money. But cooperatives began the marketing of citrus, of prunes, of raisins, of eggs. All California developments.

Nathan: Are you thinking of the new towns?

Leary: No, I'm not thinking about new towns. I'm thinking about a time when--pre-Merriam's time, way back--there were a number of communities that had been formed and that had certain tax advantages and so forth because they were run as cooperatives. They were totally consumer-oriented, you know, and producer-and-consumer kind of exchange things. They were going to be a new

Leary: style of the West. They were the--what was the name of the New England towns that were ideally formed in order to establish--? They were farms, farming communities.

But the consumer movement, I used to think, was going to explode through the Depression, and it grew some but not as far as I thought it would. And I'm wondering whether it will continue to grow as prices, as cost of living, make people more conscious of advantages in joining together. I see now lots of new groupings of people going together to market.

Nathan: Food conspiracies for purchases?

Leary: Yes. And down in the West Oakland area, some of the community development organizers have helped put together a Farmers' Market type thing, where the farmers are coming in a couple of days a week, and all of the poor are encouraged to go down and buy directly from them. It'll be interesting to see whether that continues and grows into some kind of a political effect. If it got stronger and got organized and linked up from one town to another, it could emerge as another new movement thing. Now, that is a little bit of a diversion, but I--

Nathan: Oh, this is very important.

Leary: I had thought of it as things that, you know, I had kind of watched happen.

Incidentally, we mentioned at one time Assemblyman Dolwig and his unhappy fate, and I noticed the other day that he's going to get out of the pokey pretty soon, yes; it has been a sad thing to happen to a man in his seventies or so, but such is fate.

Roles of a Professional Woman

Leary: You were wondering a little bit about how one manages as a reporter, mother, wife, et cetera.

Nathan: Right.

Leary: Jane Conant was on our paper--Jane Eshleman Conant. Her family name, Eshleman, is pretty esteemed in California history; her father was lieutenant governor with Johnson. I always wondered how she managed. Her husband died, and she had twin daughters and brought them up alone, and marvelously, I think, and was a very, very good

Leary: reporter, always has been--still is, except that she's retired. She does a good deal of work--more, she says, than she can handle--doing some advisory help on PR work for some private agencies.

Well, I mention her because all of us have time demands. And then how do you watch the children, and that kind of thing? And how do you make the accommodation between what you want to do professionally and what you ought to be doing or want to do personally?

It is, for women who have a professional life, a very serious problem of accommodation--especially for those not in a sufficiently high income bracket to have domestic responsibilities covered by someone else. I suspect the present generation is making major changes in the respective roles of husband and wife to permit a sharing of domestic responsibilities. I see it with many young people, husbands caring for children while the wife is on the job, or swapping turns at cooking or cleaning. Twenty-five years ago, when my husband would get home ahead of me and then meet my trans-Bay train or bus with our little daughter in the car with him, he stood out as a rare figure, but it is quite common at commuter stops now. So I think professional life for women in the future will be a bit easier than in my era.

But I always operated on the assumption that a woman had to work twice as hard as a man to be judged equal to a man in the job market--even on newspapers. I'm told by women-libbers that this is an insidious and wholly improper attitude, that the contention on which the movement stands is that women must be judged equally with men, for equal effort. I hope that day comes, but I don't think it's here yet. I still feel that the woman who moves up the ladder in her profession, and also fulfills her domestic life, must put out more than a man does, don't you agree?

Nathan: Yes, I do, particularly for now, and maybe for the future too. But whatever it takes to do a good job, your interviews have shown how a woman can perform well both as a professional journalist and as a family person.

Thank you also for your insights into California's government and politics during the Knight-Brown years and for your grasp of the local, regional and national scenes as well. I am looking forward to reading your next articles as they come along; I know they will be illuminating, interesting, accurate, and fair.

Transcriber/Final Typist: Marilyn White

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